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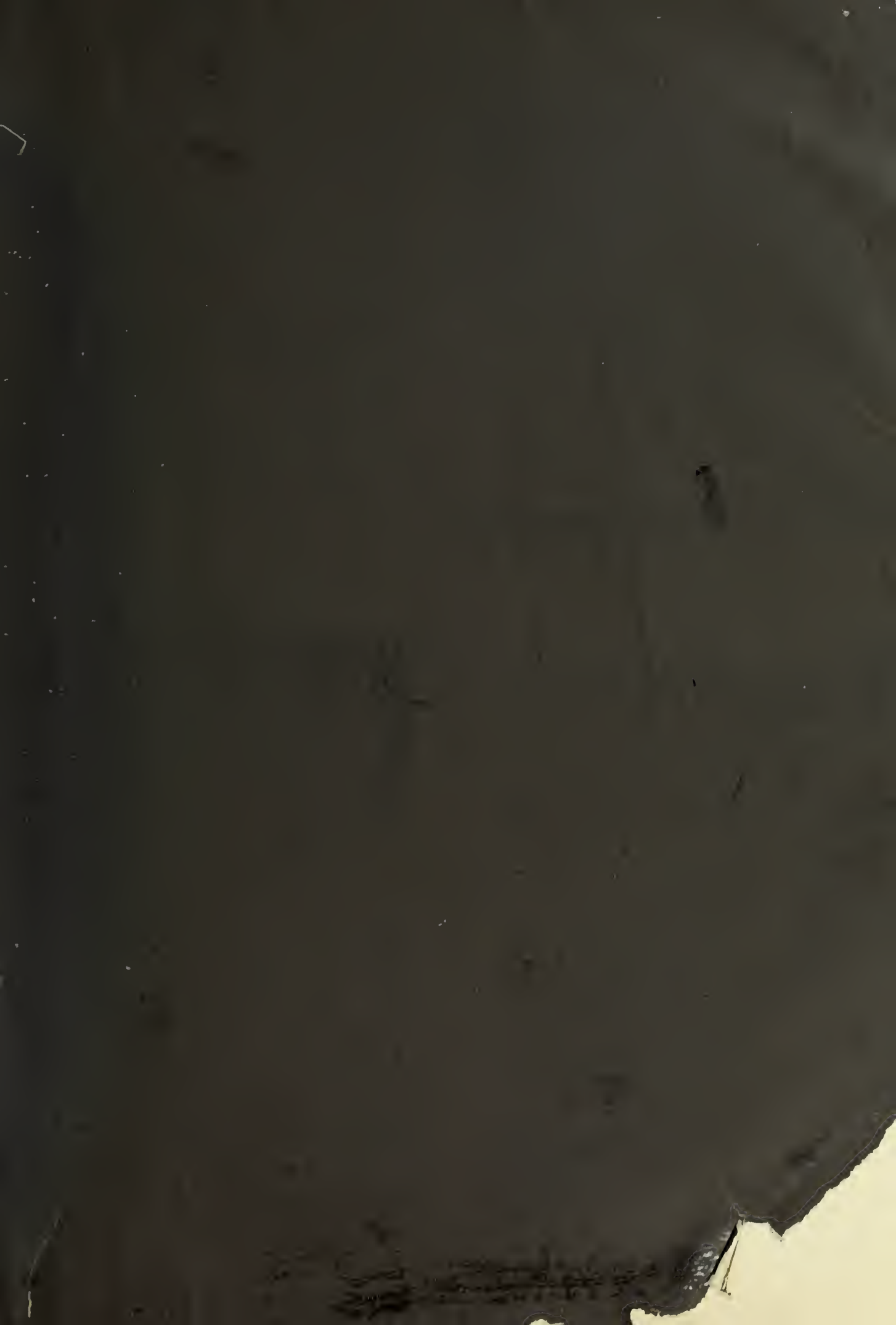
THE LIFE OF CHRIST



THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

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CARLE DOLCE PINXT

Ecce Homo

THE LIFE OF

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

AND

THE LIVES OF HIS APOSTLES

THE LIFE

OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR

JESUS CHRIST

TOGETHER WITH THE

LIVES OF HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS

By the REV. JOHN FLEETWOOD, D.D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE REV. JOSEPH BOYLE

ILLUSTRATED WITH STEEL AND WOOD ENGRAVINGS AND COLOURED MAPS

LONDON
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PREFATORY NOTE.

IN preparing for the press a New Edition of this work, which has contributed in no small degree to the piety and comfort of devout and earnest Christians, no pains have been spared by the Publishers to make it increasingly worthy of the large share of public favour it has hitherto enjoyed. It is one of the most hopeful signs of our age that it follows, with an interest unknown before, the Mission, Teaching, and Character of our Lord; and a variety of "Lives" of Him appeal to modern readers, many of them of lasting value and ripe and accurate scholarship. The labours of Neander, Lange, and Farrar, it may be presumed, leave little to be accomplished in this department of Biblical literature. Their productions, however, notwithstanding the help they afford to the student—for whom, indeed, they are specially designed—are never likely to supersede the spiritual discernment and unction of Fleetwood. They address themselves, for the most part, to the intellect, while his object is to build up souls an holy temple to the Lord. They are occupied, not unnaturally, with the controversies of the hour and the differing forms of thought which obtain among us; he plies with single aim the message of Heaven with the prevailing ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. It was the answer of Archbishop Leighton, when reproached with indifference to the events transpiring around him, that where "so many preached for the times, *one* might be permitted to preach for ETERNITY," and our Author contemplated no issue less exalted than this. His one absorbing desire is to summon attention to the "Son of Man, who came to seek and to save that which was lost."

An earnest study of the efforts and sacrifices of the "Holy Apostles and Evangelists"—

which form the second part of Dr. Fleetwood's great undertaking—it need scarcely be said, is necessary to a just conception of the objects and kingdom that our Lord lived and died to establish. In the words of the Master, we behold the seed cast into the ground with little apparent prospect of fruitfulness in the history of the servants; it is seen springing up, "in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred fold." Their career is the record of the vigorous infancy and early victories of Christianity. Confined at first to a few Jews in Palestine, by their courageous and truly sublime exertions, we follow it as it cleaves its way over the most formidable barriers, till it secures such a position, even in Rome itself, as to finally destroy the altars of Paganism, and plant its standard on the palaces of the Cæsars. The means employed to achieve such a triumph—means prescribed by Divine Wisdom, and made sovereignly effective by the power of the Holy Spirit—cannot but interest the multitudes of active Christians in our own day, who, in view of the wants of the world—never more keenly apprehended than now—are seeking to nerve the Church anew to come forth "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

In the present edition an effort has been made to increase the usefulness of the book by presenting, in one view, the Prophecies of the Old Testament which relate to the Messiah, the general condition of the world at the period of the Advent, and the leading facts of our Saviour's history, arranged, so far as can be ascertained, in chronological order. The sketch of the early progress of the Gospel, which occupies the concluding portion of the Introduction, will serve to set in a clearer light some facts and incidents which are less fully considered in our Author's "Lives" of the first heralds of the Cross. In addition, Maps are given of the journeys of Christ and his Apostles, together with an Index of the scenes of the principal Gospel labours, which, it is hoped, will assist the reader in tracing His footprints "who is, and who was, and who is to come," and who once "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should FOLLOW HIS STEPS."

LIST OF STEEL ENGRAVINGS.

Name of Picture.	Painter.	Engraver.
THE GOOD SHEPHERD . . . . . (*Vignette*)		
CHRIST BEARING HIS CROSS	Raphael	W. Holl.
THE TRANSFIGURATION	Raphael	W. Read.
JOHN THE BAPTIST	Tiziano Vecelli	A. Rordorf.
THE MARRIAGE AT CANA	Padovanino	J. L. Raab.
THE SHIPWRECK OF ST. PAUL	P. J. De Loutherbourg . .	
THE CRUCIFIXION	Tintoretto	A. Schultheis.
OUR BLESSED REDEEMER	Paul Delaroche	Auguste Blanchard.
PHILIP BAPTIZING THE EUNUCH	Both	W. J. Taylor.
THE DEATH OF ANANIAS	Raphael	G. Cook.
CHRIST AT EMMAUS	Guercino	C. Stodart.
THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST		
THE ANGEL FREEING THE APOSTLES	Kirk	
CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN	Overbeck	West.
ECCE HOMO	Carlo Dolce	
TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS	Rubens	White.
TOUCH ME NOT	Rembrandt	G. Levy.
THE TRIBUTE MONEY	Titian	J. Brown.
THE INFANT CHRIST	C. Maratti	Lecomte.
ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST	Domenichino	T. W. Hunt.
THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY	E. Corbould	C. H. Jeens.
THE ENTOMBMENT OF CHRIST	J. Northcote, R.A. . . .	R. Hart.
MARY ANOINTING THE FEET OF CHRIST . . .	Rubens	W. Greatbach.
JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN		
SEBASTÉ (THE ANCIENT CITY OF SAMARIA) . . .	W. H. Bartlett . . .	R. Wallis.
THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER		
THE VIRGIN MARY AND INFANT JESUS	Sassoferrato	Bernardi.
THE VIA DOLOROSA	W. H. Bartlett . . .	E. Challis.
THE COMFORTER	Ary Scheffer	I. T. Smyth.

MAP OF PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF OUR SAVIOUR.

MAP ILLUSTRATING THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

INTRODUCTION.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

EXPECTATION, fervid and intense, is the distinguishing feature of Hebrew religion. Other nations, which attained the summit of their power while Israel was yet "the fewest of peoples," turn with visible regret to the *past* as the era of greatest prosperity to mankind—their *golden age*, which rapidly disappears in disorder and night. Retaining some broken traditions of Eden, for which, beyond doubt, they were indebted to the descendants of Abraham, their writers speak of a time when men were free from care, and exempt from labour and affliction. Then the earth brought forth abundance without the toil of tillage, and the husbandman possessed his lands in tranquil security, rich in flocks, and beloved of the gods. But a sudden and overwhelming calamity descended with its blight. They complain that personally they have fallen on an age of iron, when guest is not safe from host, nor host from guest, and kindness is rare even between brothers. And, worst of all, no beam of light tinges the horizon, giving promise of a fairer and more joyous day—the glory is departed, no more to be restored!

Directly opposed to this are the position and confidence of the people whom God was pleased to separate for himself, and enter into covenant with them. While others linger by the past, their eyes are lifted with enthusiasm to the *future*. Their most buoyant period is not to be sought for in a remote antiquity; it is still to be possessed. "FORWARD!" was the command which stirred them at the Red Sea, when they came up from Egypt; and thenceforth it seems to have become the watch-word of their history. Their Scriptures absolutely travail with anticipated blessings:—"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. . . . Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." The ordinary expression of their faith, of which no hardship or bondage can deprive them, is, "It shall come to pass in the LAST DAYS." Nor is it a vague and indefinite eagerness for a "good time coming" which thus throbs in Jewish hearts, in which desire may be mistaken for the wished-for boon: their trust reaches forward to an approaching Deliverer who shall be adequate to their need. Material grandeur cannot visit them except a Redeemer be revealed, who shall build the former wastes, and raise up the tabernacle that is fallen down. But they never waver in their expectation: the Lord shall come, and his arm shall rule for him. The posture of their nation, indeed, through all their varying vicissitudes, from the wanderings of the patriarchs in Canaan to the

valour of David and the wealth of Solomon—in fetters or in freedom—is that of Simeon and Anna at the temple gate, as they stood up to welcome "THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL."

Now this longing of the Hebrew race for a Messiah, we are well assured, was not a cause, but an effect, of the Divine oracles and communications vouchsafed to them. They stood apart from the kingdoms round about them, in the peculiar relation which they sustained to the Almighty. They were being trained, though they knew it not, to be a centre of blessing to all the tribes of earth. Salvation was of them, in a sense to which the residue of the nations could advance no claim. And, in consonance with this, we find a glow of promise lighting up their history—feeble and tremulous at first, but gathering in brightness and glory to "the fulness of the time." This is the record of our Lord in the Old Testament, as the Gospels are his legacy in the New.

It will be our object to examine the train of prediction by which he was made known to the fathers of mankind. And beginning as he himself did with Moses, we shall follow on, remarking the increasing clearness which comes forth in the prophets, as they testify "beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

FIRST PERIOD.—FROM THE PROMISE IN EDEN TILL THE DEATH OF MOSES, 1523 YEARS BEFORE CHRIST.

The germ of the whole subsequent revelation is contained in the announcement made to our first parents, probably on the very spot where sin was committed, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it (or he) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. iii. 15.) Though more than one of the Jewish Targums understand the word "seed" in this place as referring to Eve's posterity in a collective sense, they unite in regarding the promise as fulfilled in "the days of the King Messiah." The passage teaches unmistakably—1. The Saviour shall be MAN. 2. His victory over the power of evil shall be complete. 3. He shall triumph through sorrow, pain, and suffering. We can perceive the influence of the statement in such New Testament references as these:—"God sent forth his Son, *made of a woman;*" (Gal. iv. 4;) "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan *under your feet* shortly." (Rom. xvi. 20.) The hope of salvation by Christ held forth in this precursor of the promises is, if possible, more amply confirmed by the institution of animal sacrifice, which takes its rise from this period, and the new name, no longer Isha, but Eve (Havvah), "the mother of all living," which Adam bestowed on the partner of his guilt.

Not to dwell on some of the obscurer intimations pertaining to the Antediluvian epoch, we approach the second stage in the progress of development. Here we have not, as the recipient of the revelation, the head of mankind, but the father of a particular family, afterwards denominated "the father of the faithful." To Abraham the assurance is given, "In THY SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xxii. 18.) Though it might be objected here that no more is intended than the superficial suggestion that the Jews would, in some way, become a source of blessing to the remotest generations and races, it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that the words are spoken of Him who "took not on him the nature of angels, but took on him the seed of Abraham." The contemplated sacrifice of Isaac, whom his father received as "in a figure" from the dead—which appears to have been the immediate occasion of the statement—points, we think, beyond question, to the sense which the apostle assigns it:—"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. iii. 16.) Two steps, therefore, are ascertained in the purpose of God—the Messiah shall be MAN, and the branch of the human family honoured by his descent shall be THE STOCK OF ABRAHAM.

The next advance in the process offers some data as to the time of his appearing. While Jacob tarries in Egypt, where he dies, though he gives commandment that he must not be buried there; while rest beckons him from above, after all his pilgrimage and anguish, and he sighs, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" as he blesses the tribes sprung from his loins, on one of

his sons he bestows special benediction. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. xlix. 10.) It is true this oracle is not directly quoted in any portion of the New Testament; but by general agreement, both Jews and Christians, ancient and modern, have ascribed it to the Messiah. It would be difficult to fix on any event in the history of the Hebrews which corresponds even with its terms, except the overthrow of their native government, when Archelaus, the son of Herod, was ignominiously deposed. Up till then the Jewish nation acknowledged their own royal family; were ruled by their own laws; and, though tributary to the Romans, possessed a measure of independence and power. Throughout the whole duration of the kingdom of Judah the "sceptre" was limited to that single tribe: in the divided and rival sovereignty of Israel the monarch was selected from any. Some uncertainty exists as to the meaning of the name "Shiloh," which is usually explained the *Peaceful*, or the *Giver of Peace;* but the most weighty as well as the most ancient authorities, both manuscripts and versions, favour the reading translated, *He whose it is.* We can be in no doubt concerning "the gathering of the people," for to Christ alone, it is promised, "every knee shall bow." There are marked out, therefore, *three* facts in relation to him: he shall be *Man;* shall take upon him *the seed of Abraham;* shall come *in the tribe of Judah*, and *at a crisis when its regal splendour is on the verge of extinction.*

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deut. xviii. 18, 19.) It has been urged that this declaration means no more than that God would provide his people with a constant succession of true and faithful prophets. There would ever be found "lips" which received his truth to impart it to the tribes. But this falls immeasurably short of the scope and purpose of the prophecy. The messenger here is to be a *Lawgiver* "like unto thee," which, it cannot be pretended, was true either of seer or king, even when the Hebrew state attained its greatest influence and dignity. Christ is the only Jewish Prophet, after Moses, who could say, "A new commandment I give unto you." And the parallel so frequently drawn between them in the New Testament serves to establish conclusively the precedence assigned them:—"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" (Heb. x. 28, 29.) The conclusions, we think, which an unbiassed reader would deduce from the intimation are, that Christ would be *Man*, descended from Israel, and a *Prophet* and *Lawgiver*, who should finally fix the relations between God and the nation which was called by his name.

It is interesting to observe how Moses closes his career in the fervour of expectation which characterizes his race—alone, on the solitudes of Nebo, with the film of death gathering on his eye, fondly gazing on "the land of Judah unto the utmost sea," permitted to behold it, but not to go over thither. His spirit returns to God who gave it in an ecstasy of HOPE.

This appears the fitting place to allude to the prediction of Job, whom Eusebius makes contemporary with Isaac, about six hundred years after the deluge, and two ages before Moses. Of the great antiquity of the book which goes by his name there can be no possible doubt. The only religious rites to which he refers are such as were observed by the patriarchs previously to the giving of the law, when sacrifices were offered by the head of each family, and there was no official priesthood nor consecrated altar. His is a testimony lifted beyond the precincts of Judaism: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job xix. 25, 26.) Much ingenuity has been expended on the various terms employed in this sublime announcement, but, as we think, to little purpose, so far as their object has been to bend them from their commonly received import. Schultens, the greatest Oriental scholar of his age, justly says, "It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the *Redeemer, the Living One, the Last standing*

over the dust, refers to the public vindication of Job's innocence, who declares that a crown of righteousness is laid up for him, though he may go down to the grave under the imputation of being a guilty person. It cannot be well denied that under the appellation of *Redeemer* and *Living Redeemer*, the Messiah is to be understood." At this early epoch, therefore, there is foreshadowed, more or less clearly, Christ the Prophet, Priest, and King, "who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light."

Middle Period.—From the Days of Samuel till the Death of Solomon, 934 Years before Christ.

There is little to attract attention in the history of Israel under the Judges, except their persistent and obstinate impenitence and departure from God. Cloud and clearness alternate in their condition, but cloud predominates. It was a period of force rather than faith, during which there was scanty communion with heaven: those were days "when there was no open vision." The interval continued for four hundred and fifty years. They are minished and brought low, and then the Lord raises up some one to deliver them out of the hand of those that spoil them. But we meet with no republication of prophecies which relate to "the Hope of Israel" till the time of David. To him and his successor, Solomon, a still brighter view is afforded of "the day-spring from on high." "The sure mercies of David," which subsequently stand forth so conspicuously in Hebrew confidence, were communicated to the king as he sat in his house, when the Lord had given him rest from his enemies towards the close of his reign, and he purposed building the temple, the last desire of his heart. How much was unfolded to him in his interview with Nathan we can gather in some measure from the gratitude he expresses:—"Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" (2 Sam. vii. 18, 19.) The best expositors understand the phrase, "the manner of man," as equivalent to "the manner of *the* man," and as pointing to the more than mortal character and dignity of the Messiah. That such a signification was involved in it we might infer from the use which St. Peter made of it at Pentecost:—"David therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ," &c. (Acts ii. 30, 31.) It is to be remarked how this vision of the future fills his soul, and prompts his loftiest songs of praise. It swells and pulses also in the whole subsequent career of his nation, as they weep in captivity or come back with joy:—"Remember the mercies of David thy servant." Another link is added to the prophetic chain: *Christ is to come of the seed of David according to the flesh.*

The allusions to the Messiah in the Book of Psalms are too multiplied to admit of more than the briefest reference. The Psalms themselves form an inspired liturgy, in which the pious of all races and creeds have for nearly three thousand years poured out their prayers and praises. The sorrowing Jews in Babylon mourned over the adversity of Zion, or welcomed her future glory, in the words of their greatest king. Our Lord sang one of them with his disciples on the night on which he was betrayed; he yielded up his soul with the agony of another of them on his closing lips. Hengstenberg observes, "A great part of the Messianic Psalms connect themselves with the formative epoch in the history of the hope concerning the Messiah, and with the promise in 2 Sam. vii., which composed a large section in David's spiritual life." After his resurrection, when our Lord appeared to the disciples, so painfully bewildered by the events of his crucifixion and death, he declared, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the *psalms*, concerning me." (Luke xxiv. 44.) These sacred odes exhibit him to the devout as showing a ready forwardness to become our Mediator:—"Lo, I come." They tell that a body shall be prepared him; they follow his steps

with earnestness and wonder till his soul is transfixed with grief, and his enemies pierce his hands and feet; they behold the soldiers cast lots for his garment; but they attest he "shall not see corruption," but, after stooping to the humiliation of the cross, be exalted to the right hand of the Father, "from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."

"Here's love and grief beyond degree—
The Lord of glory dies for men.
But, lo! what sudden joys we see:
Jesus, the dead, revives again."

This era revels in a summertide of revelation, which gradually fades and lessens before the impiety of Jeroboam and the profligacy of Ahaz. Once again, as during the government of the Judges, there is PAUSE, to be followed afterwards with PROGRESS.

THIRD PERIOD.—FROM THE REIGN OF AHAZ, KING OF JUDAH, TILL THE CLOSE OF OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION, 420 YEARS BEFORE CHRIST.

We can only glance at the more prominent landmarks which stand forth in this epoch, for to attempt to exhaust the subject would require more space than is at our disposal. It may assist the reader in examining for himself "the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy," if we indicate the order in which the prophets delivered their message, and the time believed to have been occupied with their ministry respectively. Our table is, of course, but an approximation, but it will, if followed, throw light on some portions of the Old Testament that are entangled and perplexing.

	B.C.
Jonah	856—784
Amos	810—785
Hosea	810—725
Isaiah	810—698
Joel	810—660
Micah	758—699
Nahum	720—698
Zephaniah	640—609
Jeremiah	628—586
Habakkuk	612—598
Daniel	606—534
Obadiah	588—583
Ezekiel	595—536
Haggai	520—518
Zechariah	520—518
Malachi	436—420

The first *eight* belong to the period before the captivity in Babylon; the next *five* to a period near to and during the captivity; and the last *three* after the return of the Jews from Babylon.

Isaiah declares the Messiah to be God:—"I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." (Isa. vi. 1.) The entire description is so exalted that we might have hesitation in applying it to "the Man of Sorrows," but we have the authority of St. John for so understanding it. (John xii. 41.) He was to be born of a Virgin, (Isa. vii. 14,) which St. Matthew affirms was fulfilled in Christ. (Matt. i. 22, 23.) So Isaiah predicts that the Messiah shall combine in himself the frailty of a child with the majesty of Omnipotence:—"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . . . And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa. ix. 6, 7.) Attempts have been made to apply this description to Hezekiah, on whom the hopes of the nation were centred as they groaned under the profligate rule of his father Ahaz; but there is nothing in the reign of Hezekiah which at all corresponds in sublimity. Isaiah announces the coming of the forerunner—"the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness," (Isa. xl. 3,)—which St. John the Baptist proclaimed himself to be to a deputation of the Pharisees specially sent to ascertain his claims. His fifty-third chapter is such a vivid picture of our Lord's reproach and desertion, "despised and rejected of men," as will to all time melt and subdue penitent and lowly hearts. No wonder Jerome says, "He is not so much a prophet as an evangelist." And the broad clear outlines rise before us—the Teacher, Prophet, and Sufferer, bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows, till he has vanquished sin, death, and hell, and returns crowned with victory, travelling in the greatness of his strength, MIGHTY TO SAVE.

Micah designates the place of his birth:—"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah v. 2.) This prediction is, perhaps, the most important single prediction in the Old Testament, and the most comprehensive respecting the personal character of the Messiah, and his manifesta-

tion to the world. It was acknowledged by the scribes on the visit of the magi, when Herod demanded where Christ should be born, and they read to him this prophecy. (Matt. ii. 6.)

As the shadows of the captivity deepen over Judah, the fervour of expectation waxes stronger and mightier. Daniel, the man greatly beloved, anticipates the very date of the Advent, and describes the events in which it will culminate:—"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression," &c. (Dan. ix. 24.) Some confusion is produced by the translation "week," which should have been rendered "seven," *i.e.* seventy sevens, *i.e.* 490 years. The period dates from *the return of Ezra to Jerusalem*, 457 B.C. This took place thirteen years before the rebuilding of the city, and, deducted from the major period indicated in the prophecy, 490, thus—

490
457

33

leaves 33 years for the life and ministry of our Lord ere he was cut off, but not for himself. Sir Isaac Newton long since said, "He who denies Daniel's prophecies undermines Christianity, which is founded on his predictions concerning Christ."

We approach now the prophets of the Restoration. Haggai foretells that "the Desire of all nations shall come" after a crisis of general commotion, referring to the partition and fall of the empire of Alexander, and the gradual advance and supremacy of Rome. (Hag. ii. 6, 9.)

Zechariah gives several interesting particulars which occur in his history, as, for example, that he would ride in kingly state into Jerusalem, which he did; (Zech. ix. 9, comp. John xii. 14, 15;) that the shepherd would be smitten, and the sheep of the flock scattered abroad. (Zech. xiii. 7, Matt. xxvi. 31.)

The growth of the promises which went before concerning him is like the stream in Ezekiel's vision, which, first measured, was to the ankles, but gathered and widened till it reached the knees, and at last was a great and rapid river in which a man could swim. So through those fading centuries, in a higher sense than the poet's—

"One increasing purpose runs;"

but it is the mystery hid from ages and generations which is now made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

Ere Malachi, standing on the confines of Old Testament history, lifted his warning voice, though the nation was restored to their own land, there was no return of their hearts to God. The priests were negligent in the performance of their office, and piety languished in the dwellings of Zion. Every expedient had been tried to recover them from their degeneracy, but they were "like a deceitful bow." A more glorious Messenger would be sent to recall them from their wanderings. And ere he comes, as clouds are lowering over Jerusalem, and all faces gather blackness, and all hearts meditate terror, the peal rings forth, to be lifted four centuries later in the wilderness of Judea, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple: . . . . but who may abide the day of his coming?"

GENERAL VIEW OF THE WORLD AT THE PERIOD OF THE ADVENT.

The birth of our Lord, from which modern history takes its point of departure, looked forth on nations smitten with feebleness and decay. It may not have been apparent to those who were drifting with the current, for persons who are exposed to danger are frequently the last to be roused from their lethargy; but the growth of luxury, sensuality, and crime made it certain that the crash could not be long delayed. There had been no withholding of the gifts of Heaven which contribute to a people's strength and majesty of purpose; the lack was in the wise and generous use of the opportunity afforded. Learning

was taught in the Porch or the Athenæum, but it tended to doubt rather than faith. Power reached forth its hand to loftier conquests, but to grasp a bauble where it promised itself a diadem. Genius poured forth its inspiration "in words that burn," but it was to utter a funeral wail over the perverted activities of the present. Philosophy disputed with subtlety, with many nice distinctions aiming to separate the bounds of right and wrong; but, loosed from convictions of duty and God, it harassed and perplexed where it laboured to guide. And the dreary spectacle was seen of a community, instinct with the hopes and fears which can never be extinguished in our nature, surrounding the altar when faith was lost in its efficacy; climbing the Capitol to do homage to Jupiter, whose name was associated with profanity and contempt; multiplying in their unrest new deities, till their city was converted into a Pantheon of the kingdoms, and fatally severed from the centre of truth and righteousness. "THE WORLD BY WISDOM KNEW NOT GOD." The light was shining in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.

Yet even in this deep and seemingly irrecoverable degeneracy there were not wanting elements of preparation for the brighter era that approached. We should signally err if we supposed there is any tendency in evil to recover itself from the gulf of guilt into which it has recklessly plunged. As soon might midnight, oppressive with shadow, by its own command clothe itself with the blush and beauty of morn. But in the straits to which transgressors are reduced, as men's own sins afflict them—the thirst for happiness so fearfully forfeited—the cry for peace which returns but the echo of our own voice—as we acknowledge our punishment is greater than we can bear, our very abandonment of confidence in ourselves may lead us to the Creator, rich in mercy and ready to forgive. The prodigal's want shrouded instead of alleviating his prospects; but it prompted him to say, "I will arise and go to my father." Here there is misery increasing with every dawn: in the old forsaken homestead there is "bread enough and to spare." And the condition of the nations weary with disappointment was adapted and designed to turn them to the Lord in expectation and penitence. When the streams are smitten and the cistern empty, they will look to Him who can heal their backsliding. Besides, the prophecies which anticipated the coming of Christ, we cannot but believe, were accompanied with movements among the peoples to prepare them for his reception. When grain is cast into the soil in spring, there are not only the genial influences of the atmosphere which favour the sowing, but the ground is broken up and softened, that its increase may be secured. And, as we shall see, this was the condition of mankind at the period of the Advent. There were features in their circumstances which could scarcely fail, humanly speaking, to make them susceptible and responsive to Divine appeal. A voice went forth, though as yet it was too faint to arrest the worldling and the conqueror:—"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, AND ALL FLESH SHALL SEE IT TOGETHER."

In attempting to present a brief sketch of the prominent influences which converge towards this epoch, we shall pass in review the attitude of both Gentile and Jew to the promised Saviour, and the tokens of preparation which appear in their history to favour his reception.

CONDITION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

If the reader were to sit down with a modern map of the globe, and endeavour to reproduce for himself its known limits at the Christian era, he would require to shade off all the western hemisphere and that part of the eastern which lies beyond Scotland to the north, and Ceylon on the south. Putting aside the ancient and many-peopled countries of China and Hindostan, with the tribes of Media and Parthia on the east, there would be left the states bordering on the Mediterranean, all which were at this period subject to the sway of Rome. Her dominion was practically commensurate with the world, so that we read in the beginning of the Gospels, "It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that *all the world* should be taxed." (Luke ii. 1.) From a small community on the banks

of the Tiber this kingdom had extended itself, by rapid and brilliant conquests, till it stretched from the shores of Gaul and the German Danube to the Sahara of Africa, and from the Atlantic to the distant Euphrates. It was not, however, on the peoples she vanquished that Rome relied for her greatness and continued national defence, but on the inhabitants of the capital, which claimed not only to form the heart of the Empire, but to wield in entire and exclusive possession the absolute power of the State. Hence the civil and intestine shocks which often stained the Forum with blood, as rival tribunes shook the assemblies with their eloquence, and denounced oppression, violence, and wrong. At length, weary of strife and endless proscriptions and alarms, Rome, eager to attain security of person and property, was only able to realise it under the despotism of a single leader. This trusted individual was Octavianus Cæsar, nephew and adopted son of the great Julius, who, after crushing his enemy Antony in the battle of Actium, grasped supreme authority, and, retaining for the most part republican forms and names, guided the State to new and more peaceful victories. He is the AUGUSTUS of history whose reign, famous in itself, has been rendered for ever memorable by the fact that in his days "THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH."

Of the many populations composing the Empire, some, once distinguished, had passed the zenith of their greatness, and were sinking into obscurity; while others, scarcely heard of before, were summoning their energies to take a more conspicuous place in the march of events. The old Greeks, whose career is fraught with undying interest to the world, were but the wreck of their former selves, their passion and excitement, like one of their own dramas, closing in scenes worthy of commiseration. The wars of Alexander, and after them the conquests of the Republic, had filled their once noble land with ruins. Cities of renown had disappeared, or were only partially inhabited; or, like Thebes and Megalopolis, had sunk into villages. Islands teeming with population were now solitary rocks. Of the twelve cities of Achaia five were destroyed or abandoned; Arcadia and Messenia scarcely boasted an inhabitant. At a later period Plutarch thought the whole of Greece with an effort might, perhaps, bring into the field three thousand hoplites. And this was the land of Themistocles, which had once broken the pride and power of Persia! Athens retained some portion of its grandeur, but the old families were extinguished, the last blow they received being in the blood shed by Sylla. Greece "exhibited more graves than living men, more ruins than cities, and the Hellenes were a people drained of their very life-blood."

Of the older countries embraced in this congeries of nations, probably the most productive to Rome was Egypt, irrigated year by year by the Nile, from its seven outlets on the Mediterranean, as far up as the cataracts of Syene. Its position, commanding the pathway to Africa and Arabia; its extraordinary fertility; and, above all, the advantage which the possession of Alexandria afforded to control the commerce of the world, made it of the greatest importance to the Empire. Under the Lagidæ it declined, but under the vigorous administration of Augustus surpassed even its former prosperity, so that its population reached seven millions eight hundred thousand. The efforts of the Lagidæ to Hellenize Egypt were not without effect, as the prevalence of Greek names attests, though without doubt the native Egyptians formed the great bulk of the inhabitants of the cities. Its caste system had been almost obliterated by a subjugation of six hundred years, during which it had passed under the yoke of Persian, Greek, and Roman. However impatient other kingdoms might be of foreign authority, the Egyptians submitted to Augustus as if he were a new divinity. Within ten years of the death of Cleopatra, the emperor's name was recorded on the temple of Isis at Phyle as "Son of the Sun, and King of Upper and Lower Egypt." Alexandria became, like Rome itself, the rendezvous of men of all nations. Dio Chrysostom remarks, "Here one saw all the year round people of every complexion, from the most distant zones; not only Greeks, Italians, Syrians, Arabians, and Ethiopians, but Bactrians, Scythians, Persians, and Indians as well."

Among the barbarians incorporated with the Empire, and whose day of power was yet to come, the Gauls always excited most the astonishment of the earnest and disciplined Roman. On the one hand active, cheerful, and inquisitive to an excess; on the other irritable, easily roused to violence, insolent, and

elated by good fortune, but absolutely broken by adversity; a strange mixture of barbarity and civilisation showed itself in them. Fifty years after their conquest, according to Strabo, the greater part of them slept on the bare ground, though, according to Cæsar's account, they did not live so simply and sparely as the Germans. Among them the husband had the right of life and death over wife and children, and, as even the boys were not permitted to associate with their elders, it is difficult to conceive the idea of real domestic life amongst them. Their towns were but large open villages, without extensive buildings or towers of defence. They employed Greek writing for civil purposes, but no literature, properly speaking, existed among them, though a compact system of religion was to be found among the Druids, which, however, was communicated by oral instruction. Of all the peoples acknowledging submission to Rome, the Gauls exhibited the greatest inclination to cast off the yoke, and establish themselves anew as an independent state. After the manner of Roman colonisation, their villages were transformed into well-built cities, and Josephus speaks of the flourishing state of Gaul, with its three hundred and five peoples, and twelve hundred cities and towns. The Cæsars were eager to crush the supreme influence of the Druids, and, to accomplish this, schools of rhetoric, grammar, medicine, and philosophy were established at Autun, Lyons, and Bordeaux.

Our own country, Britain, the island of the west, scarcely known to the ancients, and only visited by a few adventurous mariners, first came within the grasp of Rome through Julius Cæsar, though it was not till A.D. 43 that Claudius undertook its reduction in earnest. In spite of the perfection to which Druidism had arrived among our ancestors, the Britons were very backward in the race of civilisation at the time of their conquest. Their towns were nothing but forests, surrounded by a mound of earth and a ditch. They tattooed themselves, and wore the skins of wild beasts; and, in the interior, lived on flesh and milk, without tilling the ground. In rudeness and barbarity, but also in frankness and honest dealing, they surpassed the Gauls, with whom, as descendants of the same stock, they had many points in common.

We cannot venture, in the space at our command, to touch on the condition of the nations beyond the Empire, but there is the less need that the characteristics of that age, for weal or woe, stand forth prominently here. This mighty sovereignty, at the Incarnation of our Lord, had fixed its boundaries, so that little was added by the successors of Augustus to its already vast dimensions. Physical difficulties, almost impossible to surmount, repelled any attempt to enlarge its territory. On the south it was arrested by the African desert; on the south-east the Ethiopians and Arabians proved hard of access; no very inviting prospect was offered by the island of Hibernia (Ireland) on the west; while on the east, the Parthians, from the character of their warfare, were obviously neighbours not to be molested with impunity. Augustus laid it down as a policy to his successors, solemnly expressed in his last will, "Rome must not enlarge the borders of her Empire." Merivale puts the population at this period at eighty-five millions, and Gibbon at one hundred and twenty millions in the reign of Claudius. Though such estimates are largely conjectural, we have evidence enough to justify the prophetic description of Daniel, that it was a power "diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet."

It was this gigantic domination which Augustus guided for fifty-five years with a skill and sagacity which earned for him the title of "father of his country." On five occasions—at intervals of ten years—by the unanimous voice of his people, his supreme authority was renewed. So beloved was he that fathers descending to the grave, it is said, desired their children to record it on their tombs that they had left the emperor in good health. His boast was that he found Rome built of brick, but changed it to marble. And it was when the infirmities of age were pressing upon him, and the sun of life was sinking in shadows, though to the spectator the Empire never seemed stronger or more consolidated, that strangers appeared in the streets of Jerusalem, then the capital of a Roman dependency, inquiring, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, *and are come to worship him.*" (Luke ii. 2.)

A variety of circumstances combined to hasten the decline and dissolution of Rome. Her earlier days appeal to our noblest instincts; they are rendered illustrious by the wisdom of Numa and the supreme devotion of the Horatii. But as years revolved which witnessed her expansion, and should have rooted her institutions, they revealed defects which gradually accelerated her disruption and fall. The gold was waxing dim, the salt losing its savour, and thenceforth fit for nothing but to be cast forth and trodden under foot. The distinction conferred upon the capital, which made it a scene of general resort, attracted to it not the sage only, but the sybarite—the mere child of pleasure, as well as the industrious provincial and citizen. "From the three quarters of the world," it has been said, "men pressed to the world's city—Greek and Syrian, inhabitants of Asia Minor and Egypt, literati and philosopher, but also ministers of luxury, debauchery, and impurity, with priests of strange rites and propagators of superstition." Juvenal, the satirist, complains that "the Syrian waters of the Orontes stream into the Tiber," not to cleanse, but pollute it. The influence of this was seen in the general levity of manners which marked the period of the Empire. The people were kept in good humour by largesses of money and bread, by public spectacles in theatre and arena, by fights of gladiators and shows of wild beasts. Amongst all ranks a slavish deference was shown to persons in authority, developing with astonishing rapidity into a fearful despotism, which, fostered by freedmen, informers, and spies, was soon to present such a series of abominations as wantonness and thirst of blood could alone inspire in tyrants reckless of all restraints of publicity and shame.

The superiority conferred upon the city, Rome, contributed largely to beget dissatisfaction among the colonies and municipal towns of which the Empire was composed. Their wealth, the product of their industry, was treated as if its sole purpose were to minister to the aggrandisement of the metropolis. Taxes were levied upon them, not infrequently oppressive, but still more objectionable from the mode of their collection. There were companies which farmed the revenues, consisting generally of knights who paid a certain sum into the treasury, and then proceeded to wring what they could from the provincials, often with the connivance and support of the provincial governor. The task of collection was committed to persons of the lowest class—these were the publicans of the New Testament. So rapacious were the emperors, that Spain, distinguished by the richness of her soil, was compelled to send annually to Rome the twentieth part of her corn harvest.

With this profusion on the part of the rulers, there were no countervailing advantages enjoyed by the people. In the period of Augustus Rome maintained a population of a million and a half, or possibly two millions. But of these *quite one-half were slaves;* and of the freemen the greater proportion were externs, who had been presented with the freedom of the State, or were freedmen (emancipated slaves) and their descendants. Side by side with the overgrown riches of a few families, such poverty prevailed among the humbler classes that Augustus had to provide upwards of two hundred thousand of the inhabitants with money, corn, and bread.

The decline of national unity and vigour began with the gradual introduction of Greek art, philosophy, and religion. The extension of the imperial sway brought with it increasingly foreign elements, disturbing still more the simplicity and solidarity of the State. At length nothing was more acceptable in Rome than Oriental luxury, pageantry, and power. It seemed impossible to revive the popular faith, and establish once more Rome's conscience, religion, and laws. That was the problem which Augustus proposed for himself, and the difficulty was the greater because the old population of Italy, and still more of Rome itself, had been almost destroyed by the civil wars, the colonisation of the provinces, and the flow of strangers to the centre of the Empire. It is attested by every writer of that age that there was a growing debasement of the general conscience. The sense of right and wrong in the commonest matters was enfeebled, and yet scarcely appeared to have reached its lowest point. Some minds, more noble than the rest, acknowledged, with a despondency allied to despair, the spreading and festering corruption. The fables of the gods were rejected by the philosophers; the auguries, omens, and sacrifices were scoffed at by those who used them. As to crimes and cruelties of

every form, it seemed as if nothing could even stem the torrent. Everything that could be done was attempted by the emperor. He offered himself as a centre of unity, perpetual tribune, consul, censor, and high priest; he exercised control over the army and the temple, religion and law. But it was opposing a human hand to the descent of an avalanche. As Niebuhr well says, "The history of the Roman Empire is sad and discouraging in the last degree." When the emperors lived for luxury elaborately contrived, when the Roman soldier left his country's battles to be fought by mercenaries, the fate of Rome was sealed. The fiat had gone forth, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, till he come whose right it is, and I will give it unto him."

Jews.

Palestine, or Judea, the fondly cherished country of this race, was occupied by Rome in the year 63 before Christ. When her legions first penetrated into it under Pompey, after the conquest of Syria, they found it in the possession of a people who had assumed the name of Jews since the time that a small remnant of their nation returned under Ezra and Zerubbabel from the Babylonian captivity. Under heroic leaders and princes of the priestly race of the Maccabees, they once more established themselves as a powerful and prosperous kingdom. But the prestige acquired by the fathers was lost by the children. By intestine discord the descendants of John Hyrcanus and Judas reduced the state to the brink of ruin. The Romans disposed of the country at pleasure; Pompey annexed the northern part of it to Syria, and Cæsar appointed an Idumean, Antipater, procurator of the whole of Judea. The last of the Maccabees attempted, during the brief authority of the Parthians in Syria, to have himself declared ruler in Jerusalem, but it was only a gleam of sunshine preceding the storm. At the instance of Antony, Antigonus was declared an enemy of the Roman people; and Antipater's son, Herod the Great, was proclaimed King of Judea 33 B.C. From that period this stranger, the son of an Idumean and of an Arabian woman, lorded it with an iron hand over the seed of Abraham, who "were never in bondage to any man." Slave and flatterer by turns, he succeeded in winning over to his purposes Cassius, Antony, and Augustus. By the favour of the emperor he assumed a more undisguised contempt of the people he governed, introducing Roman customs offensive to them, and subjecting them to oppressive taxation, which he lavishly bestowed on strangers. His cruelty is remembered by the destruction of his own children, and a proverb has come down to us which describes his character:—"Better be Herod's hog than Herod's son." Almost the last act of his reign was to send out to slay all the children from two years old and under, that the "holy child Jesus" might not dispute his sovereignty. No wonder that there was universal disquiet, and longing "that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion."

The Jews at this crisis were divided into two great religious sects, Pharisees and Sadducees. The former were characterized by their heartless exclusiveness both towards the poor of their own nation and the Gentiles, to whom they were designed to bring blessing. The Roman historians describe them as "enemies of the human race." And a greater than they repeats, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

The Sadducees, who belonged chiefly to the wealthy and most cultivated class, did not believe in a life beyond the present; and they only half accepted the prophets, though they held authority as chief priests and rulers. In their philosophy they were as fatalistic as the Stoics of heathenism.

It was in this night so ominous with oppression, when faith was feeble, and men's hearts failed them for fear, that over Bethlehem there swelled the pæan of hope, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Elements of Preparation for the Coming of Christ.

Though the Nile, when it gradually rises over the arid plains of Egypt, again subsides, it leaves behind it forces which will ripen into fruitfulness and verdure. Even so it was with that Roman civilisation which we have seen passing into decadence, and ready to vanish away. Never did people achieve a greater or more beneficent dominion over the obstacles of nature. It was on this they rested no small part of their claim to the gratitude

of posterity. Virgil recognises their destiny:—"It is for others to work brass into breathing shape; others may be more eloquent, or describe the circling movements of the heavens, and tell the rising of the stars. Your work, O Romans! is to rule the nations." They formed roads which brought into living intercourse the most distant parts of their Empire. Mountains were levelled, rivers bridged, milestones erected, and the roads themselves hardened to a floor with sand, gravel, and cement. "Beginning at Scotland," it is said, "the Roman could travel on by post to Antioch, a distance of nearly four thousand miles, interrupted only by the passage of the English Channel and the Hellespont." The way was thus prepared for the early messengers of Christianity, when they went forth at the command of the Lord to turn nations from dead idols to serve the living God.

The rallying of the peoples around a central point of unity, and the disappearance from among them of local peculiarities, assisted in a similar manner in offering a pathway to the new era. Once again it was felt, though the result was attained by mere material agencies, that "God hath made *of one blood* all nations of men for to dwell on the face of all the earth." A higher ideal was bestowed upon the race. Jew and Greek were seen to be alike,—"there is no difference,"—and "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Besides, idolatry was divested of much of the prestige which the hoar of ages had accumulated around it. The gods of the nations transported to Rome lost there their oracles, as the nations themselves lost their liberty. Brought face to face in the Capitol, they destroyed each other, and their divinity perished. The lofty looks of man were humbled, and the haughtiness of men bowed down, that the Lord alone might be exalted.

A very general expectation of some Deliverer to arise at this crisis pervaded the Gentile world as well as the Jewish. Tacitus and Suetonius, in the well-known passages in their histories, speak of "some who should issue from Judea, who were destined to possess universal empire;" and Plato introduces Socrates as saying, "We must wait, then, till one shall teach us our duty to the gods and to men." Alcibiades asks, "When, Socrates, will that time come, and who will be that teacher? Most happy should I be to see this man, whosoever he is." The sage replies, "He is one who is concerned for thee. He feels for thee a tender regard." The people sitting in darkness were watching for the day.

But last and most important of all was the translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language, commonly called the LXX., or Septuagint, and its circulation among learned and thoughtful men in various parts of the Empire. The Pentateuch was first translated, not long after the settlement of the Jews in Alexandria, three centuries before Christ, and the other books were added at intervals before the middle of the following century. By this means the common speech of the nations was made the vehicle of spiritual truth. Men read "in their own tongue the wonderful works of God." This joined the strong current of the hopes of the time which was setting irresistibly towards Palestine. A universal empire, a universal speech, a facility of universal access, beckoned "the Desire of all nations;" and centurions in Galilee, and eunuchs in the far Ethiopian court, pondered the glowing words of the prophets, "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away;" "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him."

LANDMARKS IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

More than four hundred years had elapsed since the days of Malachi, whom the Rabbins designate "the seal of the prophets," and no voice was heard from heaven—the hopes of the Hebrew nation were still deferred. Delay, instead of lessening their confidence, cast them with greater intensity of desire on the new

epoch. "Voices which waked echoes in all parts of the country declared that the time of fulfilment was at hand; they were uttered at Jerusalem, under the shadow of the temple; they were repeated in Samaria, where men talked together of the prophet like unto Moses, promised in Deuteronomy." In "Galilee of the Gentiles," less strictly guarded against foreign influences than the other parts of Palestine, the wider ideas found special currency and acceptance. The interval had been occupied with events of stirring interest—the wars of the Maccabees, and subsequently the subjugation of their country by the Romans, from whose yoke the Jews were impatient to be delivered, and ready to welcome any means by which it could be accomplished. There was no failure in the faithful observance of their law as to its "letter," though regard to its "spirit" had long since departed. There was a painful consciousness of decline in the interior righteousness and piety which can alone exalt a people. Herod, to ingratiate himself with his unwilling subjects, was lavishing on the building of the temple the varied resources of an advanced civilisation, thereby preparing a more fitting reception, though he intended it not, for "the Messenger of the Covenant." But the stately column and glittering pinnacle of marble and gold were but the adornings of a mausoleum, if there were wanting the presence and power of God. Rabbi Simon laments, "The dew of blessing falls not on us, and our fruits are tasteless." But a breath of spring was moving on the uplands, which would soon make the wilderness as a fruitful field. In harmony with former revelations of the Everlasting, it was in the temple itself that the long silence of ages was at last broken.

The Forerunner promised.

Zacharias, an aged and pious priest of the family of Abia, one of the twenty-four courses appointed by David to attend to the worship of God, officiated at the altar of incense, "according to the custom of the priest's office." With his wife Elizabeth in retirement, he cherished in his heart the fervent aspirations of his nation, and we cannot doubt, when he offered sacrifice in the sanctuary, his prayers ascended with passionate earnestness for the deliverance of Israel. The seeker shall not be long in finding, as many a waiting saint has proved. The angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias on the right side of the altar, and told him that his wife should give birth to a son, John the Baptist, who should "go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways." For a moment the tidings seemed too good to be true. Filled with amazement and dread, Zacharias doubted; and, being struck dumb for his unbelief, tarried in the holy place beyond the customary time, to the alarm of the worshippers who waited for his return. An accident to a priest so engaged, at that period fraught with excitement, could not but have been regarded as an omen of judgment. When at length he came forth, he could only beckon to the multitude, so that they concluded he had seen a vision in the temple. His speechlessness continued till the eighth day after the birth of the child so wondrously promised, when his neighbours and friends came to fulfil the rite of circumcision; and they would have called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. But "he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. . . . . And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God." (Luke i. 64.)

The Annunciation.

Six months after this, a scene of still greater interest was enacted at Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, within the territory of Zebulon, and known to-day as Nassera or Nasirah. Here a young Hebrew maiden called Mary was living in obscurity in the home of her parents. She was betrothed to one of her relatives, poor like herself, and earning his bread at the occupation of a carpenter: this was Joseph, the reputed father of our Lord. Though the position of the Virgin was thus lowly, she belonged to the royal house of David, being a daughter of Eli or Joachim, through Nathan, as Joseph was by lineage descended from Solomon. We have no means of determining the circumstances under which the most illustrious of Jewish families had fallen from its high estate, and settled at Nazareth instead of remaining in the capital. The difficulties presented in the two genealogies which are given in Matthew and Luke show that, with all the attention bestowed on such matters by the Jews, the

records had long been very inaccurately kept—a certain proof of the abjectness to which the royal house was reduced. To this "daughter of Abraham," whom surely, without any colouring of tradition or legend, we may regard as "blessed among women," the angel Gabriel announced that she should give birth to our Lord. Nothing could exceed the meekness with which Mary received the intelligence. She listened in humble silent wonder while the angel unfolded to her the mystery of the incarnation of "the Son of the Highest"—that he should be born of her, partake of her human nature, be without sin, be the Son of God, and that she should call his name Jesus, a deliverer. Her trusting heart and simple faith at once responded, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And once more, in the song of Zacharias and the "Magnificat," we seem to be listening to the rapt bards of Old Testament prophecy:—

"He hath showed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts;
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.

* * * * * * *

As he spake to our fathers,
To Abraham, and to his seed for ever."

BIRTH OF JESUS TO THE DEATH OF HEROD.

The Taxing.

It was a purely political event, having no immediate relation to their religious views, which summoned Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem—the spot where "the Life of men" was first revealed to sense. It is probable that, with the consciousness of "the great things" which awaited her, and, through her, all generations of mankind, the Virgin's heart turned with tender yearning towards "the city of David." This town, lying about six miles south of Jerusalem, we may presume, had of late become the object of her earthly desires. The new life which throbbed in her bosom could scarcely fail to make the hallowed city of her fathers attractive to her maternal hopes. Besides, prophecy had anticipated it by *name* as the birthplace of our Lord:—"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah," &c. (Micah v. 2.) It was, however, the decree issued by Cæsar Augustus "that all the world should be taxed"—a census taken of the condition of the Roman Empire, of which Judea formed a part—which led the village carpenter, with Mary his espoused wife, then "great with child," to take a journey of eighty miles from the mountains of Zebulon to the village of Bethlehem, where David, a ruddy youth, had tended his flocks. Some difficulty has been felt, as Judea was not a Roman province, but a tributary kingdom, that this edict should have extended to Palestine, but it need only be remembered that Herod owed his sovereignty to Augustus, whose minion he was, to make it apparent that he would promptly obey. The enrolment of each family in its own city was probably no more than the ancient and wise policy of Rome, which, wherever possible, permitted a compliance in form with the usages of the countries over which it ruled. It was not likely that, when approaching the end of a career in which his successes were numbered by his crimes, Herod would endanger the transmission of his crown to his successors by refusing submission to any desire or caprice of his imperial patron. It is known from Suetonius and the Ancyranian monument that Augustus three times instituted a census—in 726, 746, and 767. A new name, that of Christ, was now to be added to the roll of the Empire—how nearly, to our view, it was being omitted!—which would outrival in splendour the greatness of the Cæsars—which kings would serve, and nations adore.

A more perplexing question arises from the mention of Cyrenius in connection with this "taxing"—the gospel history (Luke ii. 2) stating that it "was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." But, according to Josephus (*Ant.* xviii. 1), Cyrenius did not come to Judea till ten years after this, and then he came to complete a census which had been some time in progress. Attempts have been made to har-

monize the Jewish historian with the evangelist by supposing that both report the same event, the one in its beginning, the other in its final accomplishment. But this can scarcely be looked upon as other than a wresting of facts to turn aside a difficulty. Some who are hostile to revelation have assumed hastily that St. Luke confounds a circumstance which occurred ten years later with the enrolment which took place at the birth of Christ, and attracted attention to it. This would, if true, be the more incomprehensible in him, because he knew perfectly of the census under Cyrenius, and actually records the disturbances it provoked. (Acts v. 37.) It is plain the solution of the difficulty must be sought in some link which is wanting in the historic chain. The laborious researches of Zumpt make it almost certain that Cyrenius (Quirinus) was *twice* governor of Syria—first from 750 to 753, and then again from 760 to 765, the period referred to by Josephus. If we suppose, therefore, that the census in which our Lord was embraced began under Varus, the predecessor of Cyrenius, whose rule extended from 748 to 750, but that, in consequence of Herod's death and the popular insurrection that followed, it was for a time suspended, and its final execution intrusted to Cyrenius, it would most naturally be associated with his name.

Birth of Jesus.

It was in compliance with this edict of Augustus that Joseph and Mary took their toilsome way to Bethlehem, because they were "of the house and lineage of David." Faltering under the struggle with nature peculiar to her condition, they were distanced on the road by the young and active, so that by the time they reached the "inn," or *khan*, the resting-place for the night, "there was no room for them" there. Wealth and vigour had preoccupied the accommodation which should have been at the service of feebleness; and in the "manger," evidently a place where cattle were fed, "she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes." Though the mightiest event of all history was transpiring, "nothing was seen on the surface of human society but the slight rippling of the waters; the course of human things went on as usual, while each was taken up with little projects of his own." It is well said, "He seeks no human splendours; and to show how little he accounts of them, he places himself at the farthest extreme from them all. Hardly can he find a spot lowly enough to be his birthplace; he meets with a half-fallen stable, and into this he descends. He accepts all that men shun, all that they fear, all that they despise, all that repels the senses, to show how vain and imaginary to him are all the glories of the world." Was there, then, no testimony in heaven to the sublime mystery which was being accomplished on earth? Some simple shepherds, keeping watch over their flock in the fields by night, in the solemn stillness reflecting, it may be, on the promises made to the fathers, are startled as "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them," and heavenly song proclaimed, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. . . . . And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Rising up "with haste," the shepherds set forth to seek the object of their homage, and "found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child."

> "Cold on his cradle the dewdrops are shining,
> Low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
> Angels adore Him in slumber reclining—
> Maker, and Monarch, and Saviour of all."

Circumcision, and Presentation in the Temple.

The order of events immediately following the birth of our Lord to the time when his parents went to reside at Nazareth has been much disputed. Every harmonist has his favourite arrangement, some placing the presentation in the temple after the return from Egypt, while others make it precede the visit of the magi and the slaughter of the innocents. We adhere to the chronology of Wieseler, who has devoted much attention to the subject, and whose calculations we have generally followed in this Introduction. He disposes the events thus:—Birth; circumcision on eighth

day; presentation on fortieth; coming of the magi; flight into Egypt, and sojourn there two or three weeks; return to Galilee. None of the observances enjoined by the law of Moses, it will be remarked, were omitted in the case of our Lord. A fictitious history might have been timid to admit rites which seemed to cast a doubt on his original purity, but which were no more than the signs of his complete identification with his nation and mankind. He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, and hence his circumcision. It was then, too, according to Jewish usage, that he first publicly received the name of Jesus, which the command of the angel Gabriel had already announced. It was a common name at that time among his countrymen, being the Greek form of Joshua, meaning "whose salvation is Jehovah;" but, as bestowed on him, it becomes the "name that is above every name." It is interesting to remark how "in all things he is made like unto his brethren."

On the fortieth day after his birth—until which time his mother could not leave the house—he was brought to the temple to present the offering which redeemed from the priesthood the first-born male children of Israel. The proper offering on such occasions was a yearling lamb for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or turtle-dove for a sin-offering. (Lev. xii. 6.) When the parents were poor this might be reduced to two turtle-doves or two young pigeons; and such was the redemption presented for Him who "for our sakes became poor." The humiliation which rested on his nativity shadowed him here, but the contrast of lowliness and glory which breaks forth in his whole life shines resplendent in this hour. Scarcely is he borne across the threshold of the temple before he is welcomed by a prophetic voice. An aged saint, Simeon, to whom it had been revealed that he would not taste death till he had seen the Lord's Christ, took him in his arms, and poured forth that glorious song, the "Nunc Dimittis," which for eighteen centuries has been so dear to Christian hearts. At the same time, "one Anna, a prophetess," coming in, "gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." We may not be favoured with a sight of Christ's bodily presence, but if we behold his glory by faith, we, too, shall smile at the prospect of death, and be satisfied to close our eyes on every earthly object.

The Visit of the Magi.

The prophecy of Simeon, that the Child should be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," received a speedy confirmation not many days after in the visit of the magi. Much controversy has been excited as to the country whence they came, no further hint being furnished by the evangelist than that it was "from the east," and the special aspect of the heavens which led them to Jerusalem. Arabia, Persia, Chaldea, and Parthia have all had their advocates in those who have given their attention to the subject. Some prefer Persia, because this was the home of the magian religion; others Arabia, because the gifts (Matt. ii. 11) were native to that country, and it was near to Judea, and also because of the prediction of the Psalmist (Ps. lxxii. 10), that the kings of Sheba and Seba should offer gifts. No certain conclusion can be arrived at from the terms of the Gospel narrative. The magi, distinctively so called, were a tribe of the Medes, to whom were intrusted all the priestly functions connected with the practice of that religion, holding a similar relation to the other tribes of their people which the tribe of Levi sustained to the Jews. They were astrologers and interpreters of dreams. The name, though at first one of honour—Daniel having been, during the captivity in Babylon, chief of the magi (Dan. ii. 48)—in later times lost its significance, and was applied to all who made pretensions to supernatural knowledge. By the time of the Acts of the Apostles it was degraded to a mixture of jugglery and deceit. Simon Magus is Simon the Magian. (Acts viii. 9.) It may appear strange to us that Heaven should hold intercourse with those who were following a mere superstition; but there is a period in the history even of a false religion "when it is respectable, deserving reverence; when men believe it; when it is, in fact, associated with the highest feelings that are in man, and the channel even for God's manifestation to the soul. And there is a time when it becomes less and less credible, when clearer science is superseding its pretensions; and then is the period in which one class of men, like

Simon, keep up the imposture." At the time of the adoration of the magi it was midway between its glory and decline.

The appearance of the heavens which induced the wise men to leave their home in the East to ask, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" is believed by Kepler to have been the discovery of a celestial body, till then unknown, which came into view in the neighbourhood of Jupiter and Saturn, at their conjunction, in the year of Rome 748. By a very remarkable coincidence, the chronological tables of China show that a star which was only visible for seventy days was observed in that year. Assuming the birth of Christ to have taken place in 749, this would justify the inquiry of Herod "what time the star appeared," and the sanguinary measures to which he resorted to shield his threatened throne. The description which St. Matthew gives of the star, the part it plays in guiding the wise men, its appearing and disappearing, cannot, however, well be explained by a reference to the conjunctions of planets, or the ordinary movements of the stars; and the view to which modern criticism inclines is the most probable—that it was a luminous meteor which appeared under special laws, and for a special purpose. "The visit of the magi brings the facts of the gospel history into close connection with Jewish belief, with ancient prophecy, with secular history, and with modern science; and furnishes us with new confirmations of our faith, derived incidentally, and therefore in the most unsuspicious manner, from indisputable and unexpected quarters." Their coming testified that national barriers were about to be thrown down; that the Child was more than a mere son of David; and that a kingdom greater than that of Solomon "in all his glory" was on the eve of being established. The fact that their gifts were offered "in the house" shows that Joseph and Mary had left the inn, and were living as ordinary inhabitants of Bethlehem.

Cruelty of Herod.—Flight into Egypt.

The wise men, warned of God not to return to Herod, who had commanded them to bring him word when they found the Child, departed into their own country another way. If they had come from beyond the Euphrates, it is probable they travelled by way of Damascus, and thence to Jerusalem. In returning they may have gone south of the Dead Sea to Petra, and thence have crossed the Euphrates. The same night, it would appear, Joseph was warned in a dream to "take the young Child and his mother, and flee into Egypt," because Herod would seek the young Child's life to destroy him. Egypt has been, in every age, the natural place of refuge for all who were driven from Palestine by persecution or distress. Rhinocolura, the river of Egypt,—

> "The brook that parts
> Egypt from Syrian ground,"—

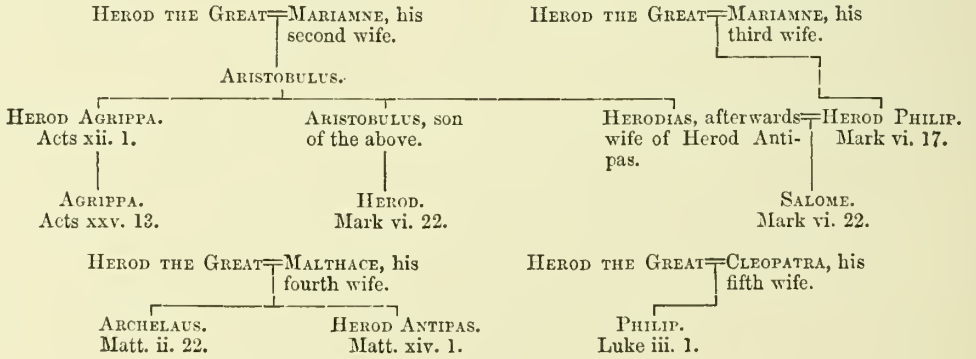
might have been reached by the travellers in three days, and once upon the further bank, they were beyond the reach of Herod's jurisdiction. The apocryphal Gospels of the infancy represent the stay here as prolonged over several years, but the nearness of Herod's death, which happened in the April following, leads us to believe it was confined to a few weeks. It was marked, however, by one of those sanguinary outbursts which track the reign of the Idumean king, whose hateful dominion was rendered memorable by the incarnation of our Lord. All history combines in attributing to him a cruelty almost unparalleled. His whole career was red with the blood of murder. "He massacred priests and nobles; he decimated the Sanhedrim; he caused the high priest, his brother-in-law, the young Aristobulus, to be drowned before his eyes in pretended sport; he ordered the strangulation of his favourite wife, Mariamne, though she seems to have been the only human being whom he really loved. His sons, Alexander, Aristobulus, and Antipater; his uncle Joseph; Antigonus and Alexander, the uncle and father of his wife; his mother-in-law, Alexandra; his kinsman, Cortobanus; his friends, Dositheus and Gadias, were but a few of the multitude who fell victims to his suspicious and guilty terrors. Deaths by strangulation, deaths by burning, deaths by being cleft asunder, deaths by secret assassination, confessions forced by unutterable torture, mark the annals of a reign which was so cruel that, in the energetic language of the Jewish ambassadors to the Emperor Augustus, 'the survivors during his lifetime were

even more miserable than the sufferers.'" It was this monster who, balked in his vengeance on the infant Saviour by the non-return of the wise men, and determined that he should not escape his fangs, commanded the massacre of all the children from two years old and under in the territory of Bethlehem. The silence of Josephus has been urged as a proof of the improbability of this event, but good reasons may be offered for its omission by the historian. The number of victims was probably small, the atrocity may have been performed in secret, or the Jewish chronicler may have been unwilling to record a fact so damaging to one who was the puppet and sycophant of his Roman masters. The blood of the innocents was but a drop in that crimson river in which Herod was steeped to the very lips. As he knew that none would shed one tear for him, to give the appearance of public sorrow at his death, he is said to have issued an order that the principal families in the kingdom and the chiefs of the tribes should come to Jericho. They came, and then, shutting them in the hippodrome, he secretly commanded his sister Salome that at the moment of his death they should all be massacred. It was amid scenes like these, as had been foretold, that "in Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

Return to Nazareth.

It was the original intention of Joseph, on his return from Egypt, to fix his home in Bethlehem; but on the way thither he heard news which caused him to abandon his design. On the death of Herod, Augustus had decided in favour of Archelaus, who, though younger than Antipas, was the heir nominated by his father's last will, and who, Josephus says, "gave his subjects a specimen of his future virtue by ordering a slaughter of three thousand of his own countrymen at the temple." Afraid to trust the precious life committed to his care to a rule so truculent, the carpenter settled in the town of Nazareth, in Galilee, which had been his abode before the events of that great and memorable year.

We subjoin a table of the chief connections of Herod's family, so far as they are mentioned in Scripture history:—



RESIDENCE AT NAZARETH. FROM THE YEAR OF ROME 750—780.

Nazareth, in which our Lord spent the first thirty years of his life, was a small town in Lower Galilee, situated in the territory of Zebulon, and about midway between the Mediterranean on the west, and the Sea of Galilee on the east. It is not once mentioned in the Old Testament, nor by Josephus, whence it is concluded that up till this time it was a place of no importance. Its natural advantages make it certain, however, that it must have been inhabited from a remote period. The extent and majesty of the prospect from the top of the hill on the north-west of the city, "the Hill of Precipitation," (Luke iv. 29,)

are spoken of with enthusiasm in all books of modern travel in the East. On the west there are the rich forelands of Carmel, and in the distance Carmel itself; on the east, Tabor, with the lesser Hermon and Gilboa rising by its side, and guiding the eye to the mountains of Samaria in the south. The broad plain of Esdraelon lies stretched out below, girt with mountains as if encircled by eternal walls; and beyond Carmel, to the right and left, the Mediterranean rolls its waves like mirrors of light. Tischendorf says, "Two thousand years may possibly have changed much, but as much as I saw to-day must also have been spread out before the Divine eye of the Son of Joseph of Nazareth. How often may he not have wandered where I was now, his sacred heart full of the conception of his doctrine, which, from the narrow mountains of his little home, should fill all the mountains and seas of earth, every land and every heart!" Nazareth was to acquire its greatest glory from the "holy Child" who now took up his abode in its obscurity. Distant ages shall venerate its name, as linked with his tenderness, sympathy, and power. It was an inspiration to Bartimeus in his darkness, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by;" (Luke xviii. 37;) it was lifted by Pilate as the inscription on the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." (John xix. 19.)

The whole province of Galilee, to which Nazareth belonged, we learn from the Gospels, possessed an unenviable reputation among the Jews strictly so called. It was early peopled by a mixed race of Phœnicians and Arabs, who were little likely to obtain favour in the eyes of a nation so exclusive as the Hebrews. The name was first applied to the twenty cities of Kedesh-Naphtali, which Solomon presented to Hiram, King of Tyre, for his aid in procuring materials for the temple, and on which the receiver is said to have bestowed the epithet "Cabul," an expression of disappointment and contempt. No influence calculated to enlighten and elevate, it was presumed, could issue from its coasts. "Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." (John vii. 52.) The very speech of its inhabitants was deemed barbarous by the descendants of Abraham, and "bewrayed" them, as a provincial dialect attracts attention with ourselves. "In lower deep there may be lower," and Nazareth was at this time the reproach of Galilee, as the province itself was the Bœotia of Palestine. Nathanael, a native of Cana, and therefore sharing in the infamy to which Galileans were ordinarily subjected, asked incredulously, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46.)

At Nazareth there was a freer life breathing than could be attained in Jerusalem, where the Pharisees tithed "mint and anise and cummin;" so that not only for the protection it afforded, but also on account of its wide and varied population, it furnished a fitting theatre of preparation for the work which our Lord had undertaken. It was in the centre of wants which it was the object of his coming to satisfy, and of transgression and guilt which his pity would expiate. The scenes spread out around him were calculated to intensify his desires for the salvation of men. "The isles of the Gentiles, and all the glorious regions of Europe, were almost visible over the shining waters of the western sea." That land on which he looked "had glittered with the lances of the Amalekites; it had been trodden by the phalanxes of Alexander; it was destined hereafter to ring with the battle-cry of the Crusaders, and thunder with the artillery of England and France. In that plain of Jezreel, Europe and Asia, Barbarism and Civilisation, the history of the past and the hopes of the present, were all to meet."

In this spot was Christ content to dwell for thirty years unknown and unregarded, taking upon him the heritage of poverty and the burden of toil; for though tradition would stamp the period as devoted to contemplation, his townsmen describe him as "the carpenter, the son of Mary." (Mark vi. 3.) He seeks not to turn from him aught of lowliness or suffering to which his brethren are exposed.

> "He was not
> In costly raiment clad, nor on his brow
> The symbol of a princely lineage wore;
> No followers at his back, nor in his hand
> Buckler, or sword, or spear."

During this long interval there is no parting of the veil which conceals him from us, except once when, at the age of twelve years, he accompanies his parents to Jerusalem to the Passover, when he is missed from

their side, and after three days' absence is found seated among the doctors in the temple, "hearing them, and asking them questions." His heart was in the holy place which he is soon to honour with his ministry and sacrifice. To him it is natural to be there; it is his "Father's house," and he "must be about his Father's business." But "they understood not the saying which he spake unto them"—types of what multitudes in every age "whose eyes are holden that they cannot know him!"

MISSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, AND BAPTISM OF JESUS, 779-780, OR ABOUT FOUR YEARS BEFORE THE USUAL RECKONING.

The epoch when the forerunner of our Lord entered on his ministry is marked by St. Luke with the utmost chronological precision: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar," &c. (Luke iii. 1, 2.) By the will of Herod the Great, afterwards in part confirmed by Augustus, Judea, with Samaria and Idumea, was left to Archelaus, and the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea to Herod Antipas. In like manner, Iturea, Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and Batanea were bequeathed to Philip, commonly known as Herod Philip II., to distinguish him from his brother Philip, the son of Mariamne, who was dispossessed of the succession, and passed his life in retirement. The emperor refused the title of king to Archelaus till it should be seen how he conducted himself, giving him only the dignity of ethnarch. (Joseph. *Ant.* xvii. 11, 4.) He never attained to the splendour of royalty. He was acknowledged by the people as his father's successor; but, after ten years of lawless and oppressive rule, grave charges were preferred against him at Rome, and the emperor banished him to Vienne, in Gaul, reducing Judea once more to the condition of a Roman province. His career was run ere the voice of the Baptist was heard in the wilderness, "Pontius Pilate being governor," or procurator, "of Judea." Herod (Antipas) was "tetrarch of Galilee," between whom and John there sprang up a friendship, which was ruthlessly quenched in blood. Annas and Caiaphas were high priests—the former, though deposed, retaining much of his influence, and exercising some of the functions of the priesthood conjointly with Caiaphas, his son-in-law. (John xviii. 13.) "The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius," it is generally agreed, is not the fifteenth from his full accession on the death of Augustus, but from the period when, in consequence of increasing infirmities, he was associated with him in the government of the empire. Most chronologists concur in placing the decree of the senate which invested him with this authority near the end of 764 or beginning of 765. His fifteenth year, therefore, would be 779, at which time, if our Lord "began to be about thirty years of age," we obtain 749 as the era of his birth—the date which we have followed; and the close of 779, "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius," may be accepted with tolerable confidence as the dawn of the Baptist's ministry.

Preaching of John.

The position of John is peculiar and unique, standing on the border-land of the two dispensations. There is a past to be forsaken, and he summons men to repent—it has not profited them that have been exercised therein; but there is a future radiant with joy and promise—"the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The imagery of his discourses seems to partake of the sternness of the desert from which he emerges—the silent shores of the Dead Sea, where every trace of life vanishes, and the justice of God alone is heard. The axe was to be laid to the root of the trees, while a fan would throughly purge the floor, the wheat being gathered into the garner, but the chaff burned up with unquenchable fire. Probably only a challenge so sharp and rugged could break the slumbers of a soft and luxurious age. The habits of the Baptist corresponded with his mission. He is clothed in camel's hair, while "they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses." Men muse what the message may import, but he demands, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Neither ancestry, nor profession, nor pretence will avail; the "baptism with water" is to be followed by a more searching

"baptism with fire." But while the preacher is so urgent, wielding rather the thunders of the Old Testament than the entreaties of the New, he disclaims all assumption of Divine attributes and homage. "'There standeth one among you, whom ye know not:' turn to him, honour him. I am but 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'"

Baptism of our Lord.

Panting for deliverance from an overwhelming sense of evil in the heart, all classes responded to the bold and earnest tones of the forerunner; and to the bed of the Jordan, "where he baptized," descended soldier and scribe, Pharisee and publican, confessing and bewailing their sins. "From every quarter of the country—from priestly Hebron, from holy Jerusalem, from smiling Galilee—they came streaming forth to catch the accents of this strange voice." No such heaving of religious excitement had been witnessed in Judea since the days of Ezra; and alone, with no disciples accompanying him, as if his hour were come to breast the torrent of Jewish impenitence and crime, Jesus came from his home at Nazareth to assume the direction of the new kingdom. He needed no purification; it was his to impart it to others. With shrinking and remonstrance John declined to baptize him—"I have need to be baptized of thee;" but he said, "Suffer it to be so now;" and as he stepped into the stream, and the sign was bestowed upon him, "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was his manifestation unto Israel. Lange observes, "It is at Christ's own baptism that we have the first distinct revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and it is at the institution of baptism for his church that the doctrine brightens into full glory."

FROM THE BAPTISM TO THE FIRST PASSOVER OF OUR LORD. JANUARY TO APRIL, 780.

We can do little more than indicate the events which belong to this period, and to the general history of Christ, as our object is to offer to the reader a comprehensive outline rather than a commentary on the Gospels.

The Temptation, and Call of First Disciples.

As our seasons of holiest communion are frequently followed by days of desertion and gloom, so, after the glory of our Lord's baptism, came the struggle of the temptation, which tradition places on a mountain to the south of Jericho—"an almost perpendicular wall of rock, twelve or fifteen hundred feet above the plain," and called, from the forty days which were occupied with the conflict, Quarantania. "The prince of this world" came to dispute the progress of the Redeemer, as he also subsequently harassed him towards the close of his career; but it was to return baffled and discomfited. There was a gradual increase in the efforts of the foe to seduce him from his integrity. The first temptation appealed to the sense of want, material need—"Command that these stones be made bread;" the second aimed at his confidence in Divine protection—"Cast thyself down;" the third at his expectations of world-wide influence—"All this will I give thee." There were two ways open to Christ for acquiring the dominion he asserted: it might be obtained as the gift of evil, or by overcoming it—at the beginning of his career, or at its end. Christ would possess the sovereignty of earth, but it would be by destroying "the works of the devil."

The victory in the wilderness secured, our Lord returns to Bethany (not Bethabara) to John, who, in consequence of the attention attracted by the baptism of Jesus, has a deputation of the Sanhedrim sent to him from Jerusalem to ask, "Who art thou?" Here Christ continues some time, and attaches to himself his first disciples, Andrew, Simon, Philip, and John, formerly in attendance on the Baptist. It is not certain whether Nathanael confessed him at Bethany,

or at his home in Cana of Galilee, (John xxi. 2,) whither we find our Lord immediately proceeded.

Beginning of Miracles.

The marriage in Cana, the beginning of Christ's miracles, at once displays the broad contrast between his ministry and the asceticism of John. Many conjectures have been hazarded concerning the persons whose bridal was hallowed by the presence of Jesus. Some say the bridegroom was a son of Alpheus and Mary; others, John the apostle; others still, Simon the Canaanite; but nothing certain can be determined. As no allusion is made to Joseph, it is presumed that he was already dead. By his communion and ready sympathy, Christ honours the family as the germ and strength of the state. Though he would not turn the stones of the wilderness into bread to allay his own hunger, he "relieves the perplexity of a humble wedding feast by changing water into wine."

From Cana he passes to Capernaum in company with his disciples, being probably invited by Peter and Andrew, who appear to have resided there. It is suggested that, as the Passover was not far distant, they might have desired to join some of the numerous parties of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to the feast. It is evident that on this occasion Jesus did not continue many days at Capernaum, nor does he seem to have taught with any desire for publicity. His time was not yet come.

First Public Visit to Jerusalem.

The Passover which followed these events extended from the 11th to 18th April, and it was here, in the capital of his nation, that Jesus first came into conflict with the leaders of the Jews. The temple had been converted into a noisy market—"the tables of the money-changers" pressed on the table of shewbread, as if the latter were less important than the former. When the spiritual portion of the service was profaned to such a degree, what could be expected of the material? "It was not wonderful that the court was given up to mercenaries, when the sanctuary had become the harbour of religious cupidity, and worship was turned into a means of trading by men eager for power or credit." His "Father's house" he would not suffer to be thus degraded; and, taking a whip of small cords, he drove out the buyers and sellers, and said, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." It was the first blow struck in the work of reformation; and though no hands were laid upon him, and his enemies contented themselves with demanding a sign by what authority he did these things, it is clear from his words that already the vision of his rejection was darkening on his soul: the temple would be destroyed in a double sense; "the temple of his body," and that gorgeous structure which had been forty and six years in building. The die was cast irrevocably. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

DIVISIONS OF OUR LORD'S LIFE.

Henceforward there are three stages distinctly marked in our Lord's public life. The first is that extending from the Passover just referred to (John ii. 13) to the feast when the impotent man was healed, (John v. 1,) and embracing about one year. It begins with the cleansing of the temple, and ends with the determination of the Jews to kill him because he made himself equal with God. During this period his labours were mainly confined to Judea. Near its close occurred the imprisonment of the Baptist.

The second is that following the return of Jesus to Galilee immediately after the feast, (John v. 1,) and covers the whole continuance of his ministry there, or about eighteen months. This period may be divided into two portions, of which the death of John will serve as the line of demarcation.

The third begins with the final departure of Jesus from Galilee, and ends with his death at Jerusalem, five or six months later.

FIRST PERIOD. FROM APRIL, 780, TO MARCH, 781.

It does not appear that any of the rulers were specially disposed to favour him from the works which he did at the Passover, except Nicodemus, who came to him *by night* as an inquirer. Though the "master of Israel" did not openly identify himself with the disciples during our Lord's life, we find him opposing Christ's condemnation, (John vii. 50,) and subsequently taking part, with Joseph of Arimathea, in his burial. John continues his work, but leaves the Jordan and goes to Ænon, the site of which is unknown. From the desire which Nicodemus exhibited to conceal his visit, we may gather that a feeling of hostility towards our Lord already existed among the chief priests and rulers.

After the Passover, Jesus, leaving Jerusalem, went into some part of the adjacent territory, or into the province of Judea, as distinguished from its chief city. The precise locality to which he betook himself is not mentioned, but, as his purpose was to baptize, we may assume it to have been near the Jordan, or some of the streams flowing into it. That, by means of his disciples, he began the work of baptism shortly after the feast, and before his return to Galilee, seems evident from the narrative; and though there is a paucity of events in this period, we may believe that his time was fully employed in teaching the multitudes that came to be baptized, and that he attended the feasts of Pentecost and tabernacles, thus coming more or less into contact with the priests and Pharisees. He may also have visited many other parts of Judea, and beheld the spiritual condition and perversity of the people. It has been suggested, also, that it was probably at this time he formed those deep and lasting friendships of which we afterwards find traces, as, for instance, that with Joseph of Arimathea, and that with Mary and Martha.

Samaria.

That the Pharisees had heard our Lord baptized "more disciples than John" is given as the reason of his departure into Galilee, "when he must needs go through Samaria." (John iv. 4.) It is not known at what season of the year this journey was made, but the expression, "there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest," would lead us to infer that it must have been about November, 780. The direct route from Judea to Nazareth led through Samaria by Sichem, and was generally taken by the companies from Galilee attending the feasts, although the enmity of the Samaritans to the Jews seems especially to have been exhibited on such occasions. Josephus says it was necessary for those who wished to travel quickly to take that route, as by this means Jerusalem could be reached in three days from Galilee.

The Samaritans were held in supreme contempt by the Jews from the circumstances of their heathen origin, the course of hostility which they had pursued towards them during the Persian subjugation, and the separate temple which they had erected on Gerizim to outvie the glory of the temple at Jerusalem. It is said that, when Alexander favoured the Jews, the Samaritans claimed to be Jews, and solicited equal privileges; but, when Antiochus persecuted the Jews, they denied all connection with them, and averred that they were Sidonians. Little spiritual result was to be expected from them, and particularly from the woman laden with iniquity who came to Jacob's well; yet the result of our Lord's conversation with her was the first gleam of light which shone on his mission, as he looked upon the fields "white already to harvest." Greatly were the prejudices of the disciples shocked by our Lord's familiarity with a Samaritan; and scarcely had he concluded his conversation with them before numbers of the inhabitants were seen flocking from the city, attracted by what the woman had told them of the great prophet who had come into their country. In answer to their entreaties he abode there two days, and would probably have prolonged his stay, but that a residence in this infected air would have strengthened the growing hostility of the ruling powers towards him.

Rejection at Nazareth.

Yet Jesus lingered still in Galilee, because it was less subservient to priestly influence, and more accessible to unofficial teaching. In Jerusalem his cause would have been foredoomed to failure, as his enemies had in their hands the means of arresting it at the

first step. He passed on, therefore, to Cana, where he worked a second miracle—namely, that on a nobleman's son lying sick at Capernaum. Here the people were prepared for his reception; for they had "seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast." (John iv. 45.)

We can scarcely doubt that his advance to Nazareth, "where he was brought up," and his entry into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, were already preceded by the report of this miracle. We might have assumed that troops of friends would have welcomed him here, where his fame was precious from early associations; but he declares that a prophet has no honour in his own country and in his own house. It is probable that his visit to Samaria had impressed them unfavourably towards him. At all events, when he disclosed the greatness of the Divine compassion, which had pity on Naaman the Syrian, and shielded the widow of Sarepta, they "rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way." It must have been hard to bear, this rejection by the people of Nazareth. "Were there not some from whom he grieved to be severed in the valley where his manhood had laboured, and his childhood played? Did no companion of his boyhood, no friend of his sinless youth, accompany him with awe, and pity, and regret?" Once again he returned to those scenes and people so dear to him —those Nazarenes, whom he would have gathered, *but they would not.*

Second Public Visit to Jerusalem.

From Galilee Jesus went up to the feast. (John v. 1.) What feast this was has occasioned much controversy, some considering it to be that of Purim, while others, with greater probability, regard it as the Passover. The order of events seems to be this:—Jesus ceases baptizing, and leaves Judea in December, 780. His disciples depart to their homes, and he lives in retirement till March, 781, when he goes to this feast. At this time he returns to Galilee to resume his work there.

On the Sabbath-day, at Bethesda, a pool near the sheep gate in Jerusalem, Jesus sees an impotent man, whom he heals. A rigid and literal observance of the Sabbath, even to the prohibition of the healing of the sick, was an element of Pharisaic righteousness, and therefore on this point he took issue with them. As far as we are aware, it was the first time Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and the question as to its lawfulness or unlawfulness was referred to the ecclesiastical authorities at Jerusalem for their decision. That they decided it to be unlawful appears from the angry opposition which from that day forward tracked Christ's steps. Whether any judicial action was now taken does not appear, but the evangelist a little later explains the fact of our Lord's ministry in Galilee by assuring us that he could not walk in Judea, "because the Jews sought to kill him." (John vii. 1.) At this time, too, tidings were brought him of the imprisonment of John. Returning to Judea after a long interval, and then only for very brief periods at the feasts, his enemies there had little opportunity of arresting him. So long as he continued in Galilee, all they could do was to watch his proceedings, and seize upon every occasion that presented itself to injure his reputation and impede his work. "From that time"—*i.e.* from the imprisonment of John and the departure into Galilee—"Jesus began to preach." This corresponds with the accusation preferred against him at last in Jerusalem, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, *beginning from Galilee to this place.*" (Luke xxiii. 5.)

SECOND PERIOD—FIRST HALF. FROM THE IMPRISONMENT TO THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. APRIL, 781, TO MARCH, 782.

Labours of Jesus in Galilee.

The political arrangements of Galilee were such at this time that our Lord could labour there without hindrance; for the tetrarch, Herod Antipas, did not trouble himself concerning any religious movements that did not disturb the public peace. Josephus describes him as a lover of ease and pleasure, occupying himself more in erecting fine buildings than in the ordinary affairs of the province. Like the other

members of the Herodian family, he treated the Jewish religion with respect as a matter of policy; but the disputes of contending sects had no attractions for him, and, provided the Jews were orderly and peaceable, he was unwilling to interfere in their religious quarrels. John's ministry was prosecuted for a considerable period without any interruption on the part of Herod—"he heard him gladly;" and, when he finally imprisoned him, it was from personal, not political or religious motives. The people, too, as we have previously observed, were less under the influence of the priesthood, and more likely to accept a new religious teacher. Hence Christ could "leaven" Galilee with his doctrine in the vicinity of Herod without any apprehension of danger, as the latter was almost certain to remain indifferent to it.

The departure of our Lord from Judea to Galilee, following on the imprisonment of John, thus marks a great crisis in the purposes of his ministry. While the Baptist was free to follow his work of calling the nation to repentance, there was no room for the establishment of new institutions. The new wine was not to be put into old bottles. But John in prison could no longer prepare our Lord's way, testify of him to the crowds that followed him, or administer the baptism of repentance; and, the faithful voice being silenced by the cruelty of Herod, Jesus himself began to preach in Galilee, to select disciples, and to prepare them for their future work.

Henceforth we find our Lord adapting his preaching and miracles to this design. He visits all parts of the province; he teaches in the synagogues, in the streets, in the fields, on the seashore, wherever the people gather to hear him. He addresses himself to all—"he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Hence, also, his readiness to heal all that come to him, so that if the words are not believed, the works may vanquish their obstinacy. By degrees he gathers around him the most earnest and devout of the Galileans and of the neighbouring region. From these he chooses a small body, whom he keeps near himself, and to whom he explains what is obscure in his public discourses as they are able to bear it; and these, after he has instructed them, he sends forth to be witnesses to the people at large.

Jesus makes Capernaum his own City.

For this purpose, Capernaum, whither our Lord removed on his rejection at Nazareth, offered facilities which he could not possibly have enjoyed in the latter town. We are not told whether personal and private reasons had any influence in the selection of this city, henceforth called "his own city," as the central point of his labours in Galilee. Ewald supposes that Joseph had possessions there, and that the family, the Lord's mother and brethren, were now residing in it. (John ii. 12.) But Jesus was probably determined in the choice of Capernaum more by its position and relations than by considerations of family and friends. Stretching to the Sea of Galilee, with the great roads from Egypt to Syria running through it, and in the direct route from Jerusalem to Damascus, it gave him such readiness of intercourse with men as he could never have had in secluded Nazareth. Not only could he visit all parts of the province, but, by means of the sea, he had ready access to the towns on the other side, and to those both north and south in the valley of the Jordan. He could easily make circuits into Galilee on the west, into Trachonitis on the north, and into Decapolis and Perea on the east and south. It is not certain whether our Lord had a house of his own at Capernaum, or dwelt with some relative or disciple. His own words, "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head," would seem decisive that he did not own any dwelling, but was dependent upon others even for a place wherein to sleep. (Matt. viii. 20.)

During this period the pauses of our Lord at Capernaum alternate with evangelistic tours throughout Galilee.

First Stay at Capernaum.

Jesus calls the four disciples, Andrew, Peter, James, and John, while fishing on the lake. Hitherto, though they were attached to him, they were not in constant attendance on his person. On the following Sabbath he preaches in the synagogue, and heals the demoniac, and afterwards the mother of Peter's wife. As we have already observed, it was healing on the Sabbath which brought him into collision with the priests in Jerusalem at the feast, (John v. 1,) and, as we shall

hereafter see, it was this which was finally used as a pretext for terminating his mission in Galilee. In the afternoon of the same day, after the sun had set, he heals great multitudes that are brought to him. Next morning early he rises to pray, and then departs to preach and heal in the adjoining cities and villages.

First Evangelistic Journey.

Jesus visits the next villages, probably those lying nearest Capernaum, as Chorazin and Bethsaida. No particulars of this journey are given, except that he heals a leper in one of the cities. This being noised abroad, he is for a time unable to enter any city, and retires to secluded places, where the people assemble to hear him.

Second Stay at Capernaum.

Multitudes begin to gather round our Lord as soon as it is known that he has returned. A paralytic is brought to him, whom he heals, and forgives his sins. This inflames the hostility of the scribes, who regard it as an assumption of Divine prerogatives. He goes forth again by the seaside, and teaches. Walking along the shore, he calls Levi, or Matthew, a publican, an act which could scarcely fail to be regarded unfavourably by the Pharisees, who held the publicans in contempt. Upon a Sabbath he goes with his disciples through a field in the neighbourhood of Capernaum, and on the way plucks and eats the ears of corn. This, we are told, is remarked by the Pharisees of the city, who were watching him. (Matt. xii. 2.) He enters a second time into the synagogue, and heals the man with the withered hand. The Pharisees and Herodians now conspire against him, (Mark iii. 6,) his enemies at Capernaum taking counsel and concerting hostile measures with those at Jerusalem, and thus displaying the earliest phase of that conspiracy against Jesus which was soon to become general. With regard to the Herodians, they "were those among the people who, though hating the Roman rule, favoured the pretensions of Herod's family to kingly power. They were never numerous, for the great body of the nation looked upon that family as foreigners and usurpers."

Second Evangelistic Journey.

Leaving Capernaum, Jesus goes to a mountain in the neighbourhood, and, after a night spent in prayer, calls his disciples, and chooses from them THE TWELVE APOSTLES. Great crowds now gathering round him, he delivers the sermon on the mount, and returns, apparently the same day, to Capernaum, still followed by the multitudes.

We need not be surprised at the crowds that are represented as coming to him. Josephus says of Galilee at that time, "The towns are numerous, and the multitude of villages so crowded with men, owing to the fertility of the soil, that the smallest of them contains above fifteen thousand inhabitants." Elsewhere he mentions that there were two hundred and four cities and villages in Galilee, which would give a population of more than three millions. (*Life*, 45.)

Third Stay in Capernaum.

Immediately on our Lord's return he heals the centurion's servant. The people so throng him, and his labours are so incessant, that he has not time to eat, and his friends fear for his sanity.

Third Evangelistic Journey.

The day following Jesus goes to Nain, and raises from death the widow's son. He continues his ministry in the adjacent region. At this period John the Baptist sends a message to him from his prison, to which he replies, and addresses the people concerning John. He is invited to dine with Simon, a Pharisee, and is anointed by a woman who is a sinner. He returns again to Capernaum.

Fourth Stay in Capernaum.

Our Lord heals a blind and dumb man possessed with a devil, upon which the Pharisees blaspheme, saying that he is in league with Beelzebub. His mother and brethren come to him, but he tells them that whosoever shall do the will of his Father who is in heaven, the same is his mother, and sister, and brother. He goes to the seashore, and teaches in parables.

Fourth Evangelistic Journey.

In the evening of the same day Jesus crosses the sea with his disciples, and stills the tempest. He heals the Gadarene demoniac, and the devils, entering into a herd of swine, destroy them. The people of the country entreat him to depart, and he returns to Capernaum.

Fifth Stay in Capernaum.

Matthew makes a feast to our Lord, who subsequently raises the daughter of Jairus. and heals the woman with an issue of blood.

Fifth Evangelistic Journey.

Jesus goes a second time to Nazareth, and is again rejected. He teaches in the villages of that part of Galilee, and sends out the twelve apostles on their mission. About this time Herod puts John the Baptist to death, and, hearing of Jesus, expresses a desire to see him. Our Lord returns to Capernaum, and the apostles gather round him there.

End of First Part of Christ's Labours in Galilee.

This closes the first part of our Lord's labours in Galilee. From the notices of the evangelists it is clear that about the time of John's death, and particularly after performing the miracle of feeding the five thousand, which speedily followed it, the popularity of our Lord had reached its culmination. Indeed, so great was it, that the people would have taken him by force, and made him a king; and we read that "whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole." (Mark vi. 56.) At no period of his career did he stand in such high reputation as a teacher and prophet; and, humanly speaking, his labours seemed about to be crowned with the richest results.

While the death of John cast a shadow on the path of our Lord, it exerted an important influence on the character of his subsequent ministry in Galilee. John's enemies had done unto him whatsoever they listed, and Jesus knew that he also "must suffer many things, and be set at nought." From this time, therefore, he begins to act as in view of his approaching death. He withdraws himself from the crowds that follow him, and devotes himself to the instruction of his disciples. His teachings also gradually assume a more searching and spiritual character; and he speaks of the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. To the scribes and Pharisees he assumes a tone of more terrible severity. There is a progressive diminution of popular enthusiasm as he continues to shun public observation; he is gathering his energies for the end which he cannot but see is approaching, when the shepherd shall be smitten, and the sheep of the flock scattered abroad.

SECOND PERIOD—LATTER PART. FROM APRIL TO NOVEMBER, 782.

Sixth Evangelistic Journey.

Our Lord crosses the sea with the twelve to seek retirement, but the multitude follow him. He feeds the five thousand, and, sending away the apostles by ship, he joins them the next morning, walking on the sea. Landing on the plain of Genesareth, they all return to Capernaum.

Seventh Stay at Capernaum.

Jesus discourses in the synagogue upon the bread of life. His teaching causes many of his disciples to forsake him. He reproaches the Pharisees, and heals the sick.

Seventh Evangelistic Journey.

Jesus goes to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon to find retirement. Here he heals the daughter of the Canaanitish woman. Crossing the northern part of the Jordan, he visits Decapolis. He heals a deaf man, feeds the four thousand, and returns by Dalmanutha to Capernaum.

Eighth Stay at Capernaum.

Jesus is tempted by the Pharisees, who seek a sign.

Eighth Evangelistic Journey.

Christ crosses the sea, and visits Bethsaida, where he heals a blind man. He goes towards Cesarea Philippi, and is TRANSFIGURED before his disciples. He heals the lunatic child, and returns to Capernaum.

Ninth Stay at Capernaum.

Our Lord pays the tribute money, and discourses to the disciples. His brethren try to persuade him to go up to the feast of tabernacles, and work miracles at Jerusalem; but his "time is not yet come."

Ninth Evangelistic Journey.

Jesus goes in secret to Jerusalem during the feast of tabernacles, and teaches the people. The woman taken in adultery is brought before him. He heals a blind man, and addresses the people. He returns to Capernaum. It is obvious that the spirit of opposition is gathering intensity. In John ix. 22 it is stated that "the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue," and at this feast an effort was made to apprehend him. (John vii. 46.) The Sabbath, too, as the period when the blind man was healed, is again brought into prominence.

RESULTS OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN GALILEE.

Great as was our Lord's popularity at one time, the earnestness and spirituality of his teachings speedily repelled the multitude, and the Pharisees at Capernaum and the other parts of Galilee became daily more embittered and undisguised in their opposition. Gradually the crowds that thronged him diminished, the novelty passed away, his calls to repentance were met with a heedless disregard, his disciples were uninfluential and obscure, and his enemies active and unscrupulous. Ultimately the great body of the Galileans turned away from him. As in Judea, men hid as it were their faces from him; he was despised, and they esteemed him not. The woes finally pronounced on Chorazin and Bethsaida, ere he quitted their precincts for his last and tragically-ending journey to Jerusalem, sound like the wail which afterwards went up over the desecrated temple and impending overthrow of the capital itself: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." "And now the time has come for him to set forth, and it must be in sorrow. He left, indeed, some faithful hearts behind him; but how few! Galilee had rejected him, as Judea had rejected him. On one side of the lake which he loved, a whole populace in unanimous deputation had besought him to depart out of their coasts. At Nazareth, the sweet mountain village of his childhood's days—at Nazareth, with all its happy memories of his boyhood and his mother's home—they had treated him with such violence and outrage, that he could not visit it again. And even at Chorazin, and Capernaum, and Bethsaida—on those Eden shores of the silver lake he had traversed with his apostles, performing deeds of mercy, and uttering words of love—even there they loved the whited sepulchres of a Pharisaic sanctity, and the shallow traditions of a Levitical ceremonial, better than the light and the life which had been offered them by the Son of God."

LAST JOURNEY FROM GALILEE, AND STAY AT BETHANY. FROM NOVEMBER, 782, TO APRIL, 783. TRUE A.D. 29, 30. ORDINARY RECKONING, 33, 34.

APPOINTMENT OF THE SEVENTY.

THERE were a solemnity and publicity attending this last journey of our Lord which we seek in vain in any that preceded it. Much that he was desirous of achieving yet remained to be accomplished, and his hour had almost come. It was at this period, therefore, that he delegated the SEVENTY to go "before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come." Their number was probably determined by

that of the elders on whom the spirit rested in the wilderness, (Num. xi. 24, 25,) as similarly the appointment of twelve apostles had reference to the number of the tribes of Israel. Some have suggested that it contained an allusion to the Jewish idea of seventy nations, into which it was supposed mankind were divided at Babel. The appointment of the seventy, unlike that of the twelve, was evidently only temporary. The instructions given to the former (Luke x. 3 *et seq.*) were in keeping with a short and hasty pioneering mission and general preparation for coming events, which the brevity of our Lord's own visit would not suffice to accomplish. But the commission of the apostles, besides covering the functions of the seventy, evidently contemplated world-wide and permanent results.

Rejection of Jesus by the Samaritans.

Leaving Capernaum, then, our Lord determined to take the route through Samaria, either because he preferred the nearest way to Judea, or because of the favourable reception which he had before met with from the Sámaritans. Two of the seventy were sent before to make ready for him, at what is believed to be the little town of Engannim, or the "fountain of gardens," on the range of hills which forms the northern limit of Samaria. But they received him not, "because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem." Formerly, indeed, when passing from Galilee to Jerusalem, they were not only willing to receive him, but besought him to make some stay in their country; but now he was journeying to the city they hated, and the temple they despised. It seemed to their prejudiced minds as if he were taking part with Moriah, as against their worship on Gerizim; and this they could not suffer. Yet still our Lord displayed his compassion towards them; for, when James and John asked whether they should call down fire from heaven to destroy them, he answered, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." It was common, we are told, for the Samaritans to molest Jewish worshippers who passed through their country on their way to the temple feasts.

Sojourn in Perea.

Passing eastward to the Jordan, our Lord bent his steps to Perea, which comprehended the country stretching along the eastern shore of the river, from the foot of Hauran to the borders of the desert, on the south of the Dead Sea. Inhabited by a mixed population, Perea was sufficiently distant from Jerusalem to be a stranger to the religious passions raging around the temple; and it offered to Jesus a quiet retreat from the tumult of "men's uncertain minds." It was a field of labour comparatively new, but prophetically foretold, being "beyond Jordan." The announcement of the seventy that he was about to follow them would naturally excite attention to his movements, and attract great crowds around him. To this stage of his progress, it is likely, belongs the question of the lawyer, "Who is my neighbour?" and the parable of the good Samaritan—the answer to the question—no doubt derived a special significance from the fact that Jesus himself had just been rejected by that people. According to his teaching, enemies, no less than friends, are our brethren.

Invited to dine with a Pharisee here, Jesus sharply rebukes the hypocrisy of his sect. The Pharisees are greatly enraged, and our Lord proceeds to address the disciples, admonishing them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. The request of one of the company that he would speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him, and the following parable of the rich fool, are mentioned only by Luke. Of Christ's answer to the demand, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness," it has been well said, "The great question which lies before Europe for solution is, or will be, this: Whether the present possessors of the soil have an exclusive right to do what they will with their own, or whether a larger claim may be put in by the workman for a share in the profits; whether capital has hitherto given to labour its just part, or not. Labour is at present making an appeal, like that of this petitioner, to the Church, to the Bible, to God. 'Master, speak unto my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.' Now, in the *mere* setting of that question to rest, Christianity is not interested. Whether the soil of the country, and its capital, shall remain the property of the rich, or become more

available for the poor—the rich and the poor remaining as selfish as before; whether the selfish rich shall be able to keep, or the selfish poor to take, is a matter, religiously speaking, of profound indifference. Which of the brothers shall have the inheritance, the monopolist or the covetous? Either—neither—who cares? Fifty years hence what will it matter? But a hundred thousand years hence it *will* matter whether they settled the question by mutual generosity and forbearance."

The murder of the Galileans by Pilate, tidings of which were brought to Jesus at this period, cannot be determined with certainty. It can scarcely be doubted that it was in Jerusalem, and during one of the feasts. Some have sought to identify it with the insurrection of Judas of Galilee, (Acts v. 37,) but without sufficient grounds. It was probably some sudden *émeute* at one of the feasts, and Galileans taking part in it were sacrificed by the Roman soldiers in their efforts to repress it. It was evidently recent, and excited great indignation among the people. There is more subtlety than force in the suggestion of Greswell that it was the sedition of Barabbas. (Luke xxiii. 19.)

While teaching in the synagogue upon the Sabbath, Jesus heals a woman who has been sick eighteen years. He is rebuked for this by the master of the synagogue, whom our Lord puts to shame. Continuing his journey towards Jerusalem, he answers the question of one who asks him, "Are there few that be saved?"

Threatened by Herod Antipas.

The same day Christ is warned by certain of the Pharisees against Herod, who seeks to kill him. It is difficult to ascertain the motive of the Pharisees in thus warning our Lord. Possibly they were friends possessing information regarding the purposes of Herod, who may have been at Livias or Machærus, in Perea, about this time, when the great publicity with which Jesus advanced could scarcely have failed to draw the king's attention to him, and awaken some suspicion of his designs. If, however, such was not the case, their object may have been, as some suppose, to induce Jesus to leave the country by alarming him for his safety. But the period for that was past, "and he bestowed on Herod the sole word of pure unmitigated contempt which is ever recorded to have passed his lips. If ever there was a man who richly deserved contempt, it was the paltry, perjured princeling—false to his religion, false to his nation, false to his friends, false to his brethren, false to his wife—to whom the Lord gave the name of 'this fox.' Judea might well groan under the odious and petty despotism of these hybrid Herodians, who fawned about the feet of the Cæsarean lions."

Feast of the Dedication.

It is at this point, when our Lord had come into the vicinity of Jerusalem, that we would place his visit to the city at the feast of dedication, which John alone records. (Chap. x. 22—42.) It is not likely he would go up simply because of the feast, for, as Lightfoot observes, he might have kept it elsewhere:—"The three great feasts might not be celebrated in any other place than Jerusalem; but the Enceria was kept everywhere throughout the whole land." The festival of dedication was instituted by Judas Maccabeus to commemorate the purification of the temple from the profanations to which it had been subjected by Antiochus Epiphanes (B.C. 165), and was kept for eight days from the 25th Chisleu (about the 20th of December)—the day on which Judas began the first triumphant celebration of it. (Joseph. *Ant.* xii. 7, 7.) It is possible that some of the seventy preceded our Lord to Jerusalem, announcing his approach. The questions which the rulers are represented as putting to him in Solomon's porch, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," suggest that in some way attention had been specially drawn to him as "more than a prophet"—as, in fact, the Christ. He answers them, "I told you, and ye believed not." They were in no mood to accept his spiritual rule; the feast they were celebrating only served to increase their pride, as they recalled the deliverances wrought by their fathers, and turned their hearts away from the Redeemer. A Maccabean conqueror they would have welcomed, but Jesus, whose work was to save them from their sins, found no acceptance with them. They believed not, because they were not of his sheep, and

this was to place themselves in direct hostility to God, for our Lord adds, "I and my Father are one." His meaning could not be mistaken. Unable to dissemble their disappointment and rage, "and stooping to seize some of the scattered heavy stones which the unfinished temple buildings supplied," they would have immediately put him to death. It is clear, from the whole narrative of John, that they had formed a fixed and settled purpose to destroy Jesus. But his hour had not yet come; and, in proportion as the hatred of his enemies increased, so did the shield of Divine protection cover him.

Hopeless Impenitence of the Pharisees.

Judea being thus closed against our Lord, as Galilee had been, the only field remaining was Perea, the district beyond Jordan, where John had once baptized; and thither Jesus accordingly went. The condition of the Pharisees was hopeless; and here we find him addressing himself, for the most part, to the publicans and sinners who gathered around him. The beautiful parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son belong to this period. The parable, also, of the rich man and Lazarus photographs the character, guilt, and destiny of the two classes. It is obvious that, as the end of his ministry draws nigh and the hatred of his enemies grows more implacable, he becomes more urgent with the disciples in showing the self-denial which would be demanded of them. "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Death and Resurrection of Lazarus.

Bethany, the abode of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, lies on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, one mile and a half (fifteen furlongs) south-east from Jerusalem. It is not referred to in the Old Testament, and borrows its chief interest from its connection with Lazarus and his two sisters. It is now a small village of some twenty houses, occupied by Bedouin Arabs. The shadow of sickness had fallen on that home so dear to our Lord from its happiness and purity. A message came to him in the crisis of his own rejection, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick;" but, as in so many other instances, there was delay till the fever deepened into death. The power of God was to be made manifest. Then the tidings were borne, "Lazarus is dead," and immediately Christ prepared to set forth to Bethany. The disciples reminded him that "the Jews of late sought to stone him," but he was not to be deterred by considerations of personal safety. Death has no terror in the presence of "the Resurrection and the Life." "The words, 'Lazarus, come forth,' thrilled through that region of impenetrable darkness which separates us from the world to come, and scarcely were they spoken when, like a spectre from the rocky tomb, issued a figure, swathed indeed in its white and ghastly cerements, but not livid, not horrible—the figure of a youth with the healthy blood of a restored life flowing through his veins; of a life restored—so tradition tells us—for thirty more long years to life, and light, and love."

Alarm of the Pharisees.

The effect of the resurrection of Lazarus on the people was unquestionably great. So public and well authenticated, it was impossible for the most sceptical to deny it, even if it led them to no decisive faith in Christ. Some "went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done." Unless the ecclesiastical rulers did not at once take measures to arrest his new-born popularity, their defeat would be certain. "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing?" they are reported to have said; "behold, the world is gone after him." They summoned a council to determine what steps should be taken. It was then that Caiaphas, the civil high priest, who held the office eleven years, from A.D. 25 till A.D. 36, gave his advice that "one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." There was no question of his innocence or guilt—"it is expedient" that he perish. Before this the Pharisees and Herodians had taken counsel to destroy him—on one occasion officers were sent to arrest him—the Sanhedrim had agreed to excommunicate any one who confessed him; but from this day dates the fiat that he should be put to death. "Henceforth he was living with a price upon his head."

Sojourn in Ephraim.

Of the city of Ephraim, in which our Lord at this crisis took refuge, little is known. In 2 Chron. xiii. 19 reference is made to an Ephraim in connection with Bethel, and Josephus speaks of Ephraim in a like conjunction. This was a small town in the mountainous district of Judah, conquered by Vespasian. Eusebius mentions an Ephraim as lying eight Roman miles north of Jerusalem, and Wieseler thinks that Eusebius is right. Ebrard, however, denies that the Ephraim of Josephus can be identified with that of the evangelist, and places the latter south-east from Jerusalem, because Jesus, on his way from it to Jerusalem, passed through Jericho. Be this as it may, Christ abides with the disciples at Ephraim till the approach of the Passover. A little before the feast, many went up out of the country to Jerusalem to perform the necessary purifications, and there was much discussion as to whether Jesus would come to the feast. Leaving Ephraim, he begins his journey to Jerusalem, passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee. Upon the way he meets and heals ten lepers, of whom only one, a Samaritan, returns to give thanks. Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he replies, and adds the parable of the unjust judge. To certain self-righteous persons he speaks the parable of the Pharisee and publican. Little children are brought to him, whom he blesses. As he is journeying, a young man follows him to know how he may inherit eternal life. Jesus bids him sell all that he has, and follow him; and on his departure, as "he went away sorrowful," he addresses the disciples on the peril of riches to their purity of heart. In answer to Peter, he unfolds the rewards that should be given to the twelve, and to all faithful disciples. He adds the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. Upon the way the disciples are amazed and filled with fear, beholding Jesus going before them. He announces to the twelve privately his approaching death and resurrection, but his words are not understood. Afterwards, probably from the hopes excited by the appointment of the seventy, as if the kingdom of God were about to come, James and John, with their mother Salome, come to him, asking for the places of honour in his kingdom. He denies their request, and the ten are moved with indignation against the two brothers.

Treachery of Judas.

As Jesus advances in company with the crowd of pilgrims, two blind men at Jericho address him as the Son of David, beseeching him to heal them. He restores their sight, and they follow him. Entering Jericho, he meets Zaccheus, and goes to his house, where he remains for the night. In the morning, when about to depart, he speaks to the people the parable of the pounds. He leaves Jericho, and the same day reaches Bethany, where he abides for the night. The next day he sups with Simon, a leper—Lazarus, Mary, and Martha being present. Here he is anointed by Mary, while Judas and others are angry at the "waste." In the evening many come out of Jerusalem to see him and Lazarus. On hearing this, the rulers in the city at once hold a council, and resolve to kill him, but fear to do it during the feast, because of the people. They are desirous of postponing his arrest till the Passover be past; but the treachery of Judas coming to their aid, they change their resolution, and await the action of the false disciple. The crisis, grave with the mightiest destinies, is at hand—"the Son of man goeth, as it was determined." For the last week of his own and his Master's life, Judas moved about with the purpose of murder in his dark and desperate heart. "The disappointment of every expectation which had first drawn him to Jesus; the sense, too, that the eye of his Master, possibly even the eyes of some of his fellow-apostles, had read, or were beginning to read, the hidden secrets of his heart, had gradually deepened from an incipient alienation into an insatiable repugnancy and hate. And the sight of Mary's lavish sacrifice, the consciousness that it was now too late to save the 'three hundred pence' for the 'bag'—the mere possession of which, apart from the sums he could pilfer out of it, gratified his greed for gold—filled him with disgust and madness. Mary thought it not good enough to anele Christ's sacred feet. Judas thought a third part of it sufficient reward for selling his very life." Henceforward, in addition to the malice of enemies without, there was a traitor in the inner circle of the disciples.

EVENTS OF THE HOLY WEEK.

Entry into Jerusalem.

Sunday, 2nd April (*10th Nisan*), 783.—If we place our Lord's arrival at Bethany on Friday, and the supper and anointing on Saturday, then his public entry into Jerusalem took place on Sunday, "the first day of the week." As to the period of the day when he reached that "grave of the prophets," nothing is recorded; but, from Mark xi. 11, it appears it was late in the afternoon when he entered the temple. A fervour of excitement anticipated his approach. The stream of pilgrims moved onward with him—youth and age, the prosperous and lowly—as in "humble state," as Zechariah had predicted, her King came to "the daughter of Zion." Bethphage, the spot mentioned by Mark in connection with Bethany, is variously regarded as "a considerable suburb, nearer to Jerusalem than Bethany" (Alford); "a spur of Olivet, distant rather more than a mile from the city" (Barclay); while others affirm it to be but another portion of Bethany itself. The route which Jesus took to the city must have been the main road, which sweeps round the southern shoulder of the Mount of Olives, between it and the "Hill of Evil Counsel." This is the path by which travellers in the East to-day obtain those impressions of Jerusalem which never fade from the soul. Tristram says, "There is but one true approach to Jerusalem, and, if possible, even at the cost of some hours' *détour*, let the pilgrim endeavour to enter from the east, the favourite approach of our Lord, the path of his last and triumphant entry. It is a glorious burst as the traveller rounds the shoulder of Mount Olivet, and the Haram wall starts up before him from the deep gorge of the Kedron, with its domes and crescents sparkling in the sunlight—a royal city. On that very spot he once paused and gazed on the same bold cliffs, supporting a far more glorious pile, and when he beheld the city he wept over it. . . . . We gazed for a few moments grouped in silence. 'That is the Mosque,' 'There is the Mount of Olives,' 'That is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre,' were remarks enough. The one thought, 'This is Jerusalem,' absorbs all others." It may have been at the very point where the city bursts into view that, as the crowds streaming towards Jerusalem encountered the procession of which our Lord formed the central object, the shout of triumph went up from the multitude, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Pausing within sight of the metropolis of prophets, warriors, and kings, the past, with its glory, swept before him, to be shrouded in darkness by his crucifixion and death, and he poured out his heart: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

This entry of our Lord into "the city of the great King" was a direct and emphatic assertion of his Messianic claims. It was the last appeal to his nation to recognise and accept his royal character. He hushed not the multitude when they repeated, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." The whole city was moved, and the question passed from lip to lip, "Who is this? And the multitude said"—no doubt the Galileans, who were most familiar with his person and mission—"This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Alas! we say—

> "Ride on, ride on in majesty;
> In lowly pomp ride on to die!"

After looking about upon all things in the temple, according to the statement of Mark, to see whether all was done according to his Father's will, he goes forth, and returns to Bethany. Greswell suggests that, as it was now eventide, it is probable that the traders had removed their droves of cattle and other effects for the day. But, if this were so, our Lord could discern by plain marks that his Father's house was still made "a house of merchandise." During Passion week his nights were spent in Bethany, and probably in the home of Lazarus. "He went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there." (Matt. xxi. 17.) Another, Judas, pillowed his head on the night succeeding his Master's triumph. Did he, too, sleep calmly like the rest? Perhaps; for "remorse may disturb the slumbers of a man who is dabbling with

his first experiences of wrong; and when the pleasure has been tasted and is gone, and nothing is left of the crime but the ruin which it has wrought, then, too, the Furies take their seats upon the midnight pillow. *But the meridian of evil is, for the most part, left unvexed; and when a man has chosen his road, he is left alone to follow it to the end.*"

The Fruitless Fig-tree.

Monday, 3rd April (*11th Nisan*). — On the morning of this day our Lord repaired again to Jerusalem, to affix his seal in the temple to the truths he had taught. He no longer expected to persuade the people, but he would set in its proper light their impious rejection of him, so that they would be left without excuse. Everything in his manner and bearing was adapted to this end. Both Matthew and Mark relate that he was hungry as he returned into the city, either because he had stolen forth from the quiet roof at Bethany, "and continued all night in prayer to God," or because he refused to break his fast, that he might "work the works of him that sent him." Seeing a fig-tree at some distance, rich in leafage, he thought to appease his hunger, but "found nothing but leaves"—a striking image of the Jewish theocracy, stately in form, but barren and powerless at heart. "Had it been fruitful the previous year, there would still have been some of the *kermouses*," as they are called, "hidden under those broad leaves; and had it been fruitful *this* year, the *bakkooroth* would have set into green and delicious fragrance before the leaves appeared; but there was neither promise for the future, nor gleanings from the past." The curse which Jesus pronounced upon it was symbolic, we think, of the judgments which awaited the guilty nation that rejected him. Next morning, as the disciples passed the spot, they marked the fulfilment of his words, and said, "How soon is the fig-tree withered away!" (Matt. xxi. 20.)

Purification of the Temple.

Some have supposed that the purification of the temple, assigned to this day, is a misplacement of the narrative of a similar event which took place at the first Passover our Lord attended; but there seems a propriety that two such incidents should occur in his history—one at the beginning, and the other at the end. The temple was the centre around which was grouped all that was hallowed or depraved in the spiritual life of his countrymen. It was the heart which sent forth its influence to the remotest extremities of the body politic, and hence purification, to be of any value, should begin here. "Judgment begins at the house of God," and the salt which conserves, as at Jericho in the days of Elisha, must be cast into "the spring of the waters." "There was always a market in the temple, in that place which was called 'The Shops,' where every day were sold wine, salt, oil, and other requisites for sacrifice, as also oxen and sheep, in the spacious court of the Gentiles." The "money-changers" were those who, to accommodate strangers visiting the feasts, converted the current Greek and Roman money into Jewish coin, in which all temple dues required to be paid. Doves and young pigeons being in demand, on certain prescribed occasions, for sacrifice, they could not without inconvenience be brought from great distances, and so they were naturally provided for them by dealers as a matter of merchandise. The transactions, so far as they were honest, were in themselves not only harmless, but apparently indispensable. That which provoked the indignation of Christ was the place where the traffic was carried on—the profanation involved in such things being done within an enclosure sacred to the worship and service of God—and the effect in destroying in the minds of the worshippers the sanctity that should attach to everything with which that worship was in any way connected. It is clear that the former cleansing and rebuke, at the threshold of our Lord's ministry, had wrought no permanent reformation, for the old abuses were in full vigour. His language on this occasion is sterner than before; then it was, "Ye have made it an house of merchandise," now it is, "A den of thieves." (Luke xxi. 13.)

After asserting his authority by driving the traders from the temple, Jesus invited the lame and blind—probably those who asked alms at the gates—to come to him and be healed. These miracles, and the feelings of wonder and thankfulness which they called forth, joined to the remembrance of the welcome that had

greeted him yesterday, prompted "the children," who probably were part of the choir of singers employed in the temple worship, to cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David," greatly to the mortification of the priests and scribes. It has been remarked that "the children" only are mentioned, as if already the multitude, intimidated by the resolute and hostile bearing of his enemies, had begun to falter, and no longer attempted, openly at least, to express their regard for him.

Demand of the Chief Priests.

Tuesday, 4th April (12*th Nisan*).—The withered fig-tree which the disciples beheld on the morning of this day, as they took their journey with Jesus to the temple, was ominous of the scenes of which they were presently to be no uninterested spectators. No effort had been wanting on the part of God to make the Jewish people pure and secure; privileges were bestowed upon them which no other nation could boast; but when the Lord looked that the vine should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes. Their abuse of their position and opportunities would be followed by doom, and this blight of the fig-tree was but the shadow which the event cast before it.

The people gather early in the temple, and immediately on his arrival in Jerusalem our Lord proceeds thither, and begins to teach. As if by preconcert among his foes, very soon the chief priests and elders and scribes come to him, demanding by what authority he acts. It has not the appearance of a question dictated by the moment; it is addressed with a formality which has led many to believe that it was put by a deputation from the Sanhedrim. The reader will observe that it differs widely from the question asked him after the first purification, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" (John ii. 18.) Now they demand, "By *what authority* doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?" It seems as if, on the former occasion, they were desirous that he should work miracles as vouchers and evidences of his Divine mission, but his miracles had not been sufficient to convince them. Now he must afford proof that he has the sanction of those who "sit in Moses' seat," and who alone are believed to be the fountains of spiritual and ecclesiastical power. *They* had not authorised him, and therefore he had no claim to be received as a messenger from God. To this question Jesus replies by demanding, "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" (Luke xx. 4.) The forerunner had borne the most unequivocal testimony to Christ when, three years before, they sent Levites to him. (John i. 26.) If John was a prophet and divinely commissioned, why did they not believe him? If he was not, why did they countenance the popular delusion which so regarded him? They could not, with all their subtlety, escape the snare which they had craftily prepared for him. If they denied John's prophetic character, they feared being stoned by the people; "for they be persuaded that John was a prophet;" while, if they admitted that he was what he declared himself to be, Christ would say, "Why then believed ye him not?" In either case they would be condemned.

Although thus confounded, they continue in the temple, and Jesus begins to speak to them in parables, "a second beginning, as before in Galilee, so now in Jerusalem." There is no reason for longer concealment; the crisis of their hate and impenitence is ripe; and for the first time our Lord declares plainly, in the hearing of the Pharisees, that they will kill him, and in consequence the kingdom shall be taken from them. "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." (Matt. xxi. 37, 38.) They perceived that he spoke of them, but they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

The parable of the marriage feast sets forth more distinctly, if possible, his rejection by the Jews; the welcome of others, the Gentiles, in their room; and the overthrow which was reserved for Jerusalem.

The Herodians.

This was the last visit of Christ to the temple, and successively he encountered Herodian, Pharisee, and Sadducee, who, in order to secure his destruction, agreed to sink the differences which so sharply divided them. "The thoughts of many hearts are revealed," as Simeon predicted concerning him.

First came the Herodians, "who were mere provincial courtiers; men who basked in the sunshine of a petty tyranny which, for their own personal ends, they were anxious to uphold. To strengthen the family of Herod by keeping it on good terms with Roman imperialism, and to effect this good understanding by repressing every distinctively Jewish aspiration—this was their highest aim." It seems strange that the Pharisees, who were actuated by a regard for the independence of their nation, should make common cause with the Herodians, but such expedients for securing a temporary triumph are far from uncommon. Herod Antipas and Pilate "were made friends" over the crucifixion of our Lord, though "before they were at enmity between themselves." The question of the Herodians was one affecting the payment of tribute, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?" and probably, from the presence of the Pharisees, they wished Jesus to infer that it was at the moment being debated between them. No patriotic Jew would admit that tribute was rightly due to Cæsar, and much less could one who claimed to be the Messiah concede it, for this was to confess himself the minion of Rome—a confession which must at once frustrate his Messianic pretensions. On the other hand, should our Lord deny it, he exposed himself to a charge of treason, "an accusation which the Romans were always ready to entertain." He divinely avoids the peril prepared for him, and forces them to answer the question against themselves. Taking a penny, on one side of which were stamped the haughty, beautiful features of the Emperor Tiberius, with all the wicked scorn upon the lip, on the reverse his title of Pontifex Maximus, he demands, "Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." The discomfiture of the Herodians was overwhelming and complete.

The Sadducees.

The Sadducees, hoping for better success, then propose to him the case of the woman who, by the levirate law, (Deut. xxv. 5), had seven husbands in succession, all of whom predeceased her, and they ask, "Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection"—the resurrection which they denied—"for they all had her to wife?" In other words, can there be any resurrection? Would not such conflicting claims make the resurrection an embarrassment and perplexity, which even Divine Wisdom might refuse to undertake? The question of the Sadducees was in keeping with the cold, scoffing character of that sect. It was not so much designed to arouse popular feeling against him as to subject his teaching to reproach and ridicule. "In the resurrection," replies Jesus, "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." The difficulty was purely in their captious intellect; it would never arise in the decisions of the future.

Then, answering the lawyer who asks, "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?"—a question which was fiercely disputed in the schools of the rabbis, for those who are scantiest in their obedience are usually widest in the range of their speculative difficulties—Jesus turns upon them with a deeper inquiry, testing their knowledge and sincerity: "What think ye of Christ?" Their inability to answer him shows how little the truth that the Messiah should be a Divine person, Son of God as well as Son of man, was apprehended by them, and how all his efforts to display to them his true nature had failed through their ungodliness and unbelief.

There could be no further concealment: the hatred and malice of Christ's enemies were plainly manifest. "Their purpose to destroy him was fixed, obstinate, irreversible; and, if one plot failed, they were but driven with more stubborn sullenness into another. There could now be no hope of their becoming reconciled to him; they were but being stereotyped in unrepentant malice against him. Turning, therefore, to his disciples, but in the audience of all the people, he rolled over their guilty heads, with crash on crash of moral anger, the thunder of his utter condemnation. The purple cloud of retribution had long been gathering its elements of fury; upon their heads should it burst in flame."

Witnesses to our Lord's Mission.

The visit of the Greeks, which is mentioned only by John, (xii. 20—36,) is interposed as a grateful

balm to his wounded spirit. Some regard it as having taken place upon the evening of the triumphal entry; but the language Jesus employs is more appropriate to his final departure from the temple than to the time of his entry. His soul is "troubled," and he recognises that for this cause he had come unto this hour. Stier observes that this visit of the Greeks from the West contrasts with that of the magi from the East—the one at the end, the other at the beginning of his life.

Heaven, also, bore our Lord witness in this conflict; for, in answer to his prayer, "Father, glorify thy name," there came a voice saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." We hear only what we have the moral capacity for hearing. "It thundered," some said; others, "An angel spake to him." But there must have been "a plain, articulate sound, miraculously spoken, and heard by all, though variously interpreted."

Predicted Destruction of the Temple and City.

After Jesus had finished preaching in the temple he "departed, and did hide himself from them." (John xii. 36.) He appears no more in his Father's house as a preacher of righteousness. Rejected by his own to whom he came, his discourses are henceforth directed to the disciples. As he slowly passed from those fanes, the disciples called his attention to the massive stones of the building, and he uttered the remarkable prophecy of its destruction:—"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The prediction was awfully accomplished. "The builders were still busily at work, as they had been for nearly fifty years, but their work, unblessed of God, was destined—like the earthquake-shaken Forum of guilty Pompeii—to be destroyed before it was finished. Thirty-five years afterwards that temple sank into the ashes of its destruction; neither Hadrian, nor Julian, nor any other was able to build upon its site; and now that very site is a matter of uncertainty."

The meeting of the chief priests, scribes, and elders for consultation at the palace of Caiaphas was held the same evening, as we infer from the statement in Matt. xxvi. 3. It has been supposed, from the fact that the council met at the house of one of its members instead of in the temple, and in the evening, that it was an extraordinary meeting to take immediate action against Jesus. Thither in the gloom hastened Judas, and offered for money to betray him into their hands. His design, there is reason to believe, was to remain in abeyance till the feast was ended; but he would watch his opportunity and theirs.

Meantime our Lord was unfolding to his disciples the total overthrow of Jerusalem amid the startling omens of tumult and war, when there would "be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear," and the shriek of the eagles would summon to the carcass.

> "But woe to hill, and woe to vale!
> Against them shall come forth a wail:
> And woe to bridegroom and to bride!
> For death shall on the whirlwind ride:
> And woe to thee, resplendent shrine:
> The sword is out for thee and thine."

Thursday, 6th April (14th Nisan).—The harmonists are generally agreed that our Lord left the temple for the last time on Tuesday afternoon. He had proclaimed his mission, and urged his salvation on men, but his voice would be heard in the crowd of worshippers no more. Wednesday appears to have been passed in seclusion, doubtless in prayer for strength to confront the agony in Gethsemane and the death on Golgotha. "Each day Jesus had left Bethany in the morning, and had gone to Jerusalem. Why did he not go on that day? Did he suspect treachery? Doubtless the people waited for him with intense expectation; doubtless the priests and Pharisees looked out for him with sinister hope; but he did not come. But how the day was passed by him we do not know. A veil of holy silence falls over it. He was surrounded by the few who loved him and believed in him. To them he may have spoken, but his work as a teacher on earth was done. And on that night he lay down for the last time on earth. On the Thursday morning he woke never to sleep again."

It was on the morning of Thursday that Jesus sent two disciples, Peter and John, to Jerusalem to "make ready the Passover," which he so earnestly desired

to eat with them before he suffered. It has been questioned whether "the goodman of the house" to whom he directed them was a friend, like Joseph of Arimathea, or a stranger; but the language employed, "the Master saith," appears to intimate that he was in the Saviour's confidence. In the evening he himself left Bethany, and joined them in the "upper room," sitting down with them at this, to him, last and most touching commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt. Our limits forbid us entering into the discussion of the alleged discrepancies between the first three evangelists and the fourth, as to whether it was the paschal supper which was observed by our Lord, or a hasty anticipation of it, made necessary by the urgency of the circumstances into which he had voluntarily come. Our conviction, on a comparison of the Gospels, is, that the 14th Nisan, corresponding with the 6th of April, was the day when the lamb was ordinarily eaten by the Jews. We believe that the references of John to "the days of unleavened bread" and "the Passover" describe, not the paschal supper itself, but the whole train of commemorative services, which extended over seven days. The natural conclusion is that Christ "would keep the feast," when his countrymen generally attended to its celebration.

Thursday, from Sunset till Midnight (*15th Nisan, 6th April*).—The Jews reckoned their day from sunset to sunset, while we reckon it from morning to morning: hence the beginning of the 15th Nisan was still the 6th of April. We can do little more than present an outline of the incidents which were crowded into this night, the most tragic and memorable which the world has ever witnessed.

As the apostles took their places at the board—which, we may suppose, was about 6 P.M. on Thursday—the old dispute concerning precedence was once more brought to light, occasioned, it may be, by the preparation for the Passover having been committed to Peter and John; and Christ rebuked it, not by words, but more impressively by deed: "he washed their feet"—an act performed in social life only by menials and slaves—to give emphasis to the truth designed henceforward to regulate the Christian commonwealth, that the greatest of all should be servant of all.

As the feast proceeded he unmasked the treachery of Judas, and showed that, as the serpent lurked in Paradise, so a traitor was daring the scrutiny of Omniscience. "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." How near men may come to the person of Christ, and continue estranged from him in life and heart! The traitor went forth into the darkness to consummate the foul deed over which he had brooded in unholy desire. The moon might have hidden her beam that night, others were drooping in sadness and sorrow, but Judas's heaven was lost.

Institution of the Lord's Supper.

After Judas's removal, and while Jesus passed to the disciples the bread and wine of the holy supper, which was destined to convey the memory of his love to distant ages, he spoke the soothing and consolatory discourses recorded in John xiv.—xvii. He reminded them that the world would rejoice, but that they would lament—the hour was at hand when they would be "scattered every man to his own;" but he cast them by prayer on Him who is able to keep them from falling. There is a tremulous quiver in his words, as if they were rather the utterances of farewell than of festival—"Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." (John xiv. 30.)

It was probably at this point that St. Peter, realising the fate which awaited his Master, asked sorrowfully, "Lord, whither goest thou?" Stung by the answer, "Thou canst not follow me," as if it were a challenge to his courage, he rejoined, "Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Boast hastily spoken, but how awfully falsified! The cock-crow would witness his defection and cowardice. Already the shadows of night were enwrapping them, and "ere the dawn of that fatal morning shuddered in the eastern sky," forgetful of his promise, forgetful even of this admonition, he would thrice affirm, with oaths and curses, "I know not the man." In how many circumstances are we reminded of the deceitfulness of sin! By numerous instances are we warned to take heed to ourselves, to distrust natural courage and resolution, and to aim at

a better security from spiritual declension than a fancied reliance on our firmness and constancy.

We have no means of ascertaining the exact hour when our Lord left the supper-room for the shade of Gethsemane. Some put it at eight, some at nine or ten, others between eleven and twelve. If, as we suppose, the paschal feast commenced at about six, or at sundown, the incidents related by the evangelists, and our Lord's discourses and prayer, must have prolonged the service till close upon midnight.

Agony in Gethsemane.

Friday, 7th April (*15th Nisan*).—The conflict was rapidly approaching its termination. The garden of Gethsemane, or "oil-press," whither our Lord now retired with the disciples, and to which, during the strife and opposition of this eventful week, he had been accustomed to resort, lies on the east of the valley of Cedron, not far from the road from Jerusalem to Bethany. At evening, when the gates of the city were closed, it must have been a perfect solitude. Here, overwhelmed with an agony which we can never adequately fathom, but whose blessed results we possess in forgiveness and peace, he poured out his soul "with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." Oppressed with sorrow, Peter, James, and John, whom he desired to watch with him, fell asleep while he "resisted unto blood," wrestling for human redemption.

Judas had not been inactive during this painful hour of watching. When he left the "upper room" he hastened away to Caiaphas, and described how, without resistance or tumult, the hated Prophet of Galilee might be surprised and captured; and while the startling appeal broke the silence of the garden, "Let this cup pass," a band of men and officers, with lanterns and torches, stood revealed in the moonbeam. The signal of treachery was a *kiss!*—as if fidelity and friendship were to be equally profaned at this crisis. Though not without some manifestation of his power, which for the moment staggered his enemies, Christ submitted to be bound, and the eleven apostles, beholding their Lord in the hands of the captain and officers, forsook him and fled. He "looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but he found none."

Christ before Annas and Caiaphas.

Annas and Caiaphas, before whom Jesus was successively led, belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, and are spoken of with contempt in Jewish history. The Talmud does not scruple to brand the whole family as a "viper brood." They came originally from Alexandria at the command of Herod the Great, who trusted to find in them ready supporters of his odious tyranny. More than twenty years before the death of our Lord, Annas had been deposed from the high priest's office by Valerius Gratus, which probably invested his desire to resist the decisions of Rome with a greater value in the eyes of his countrymen. He was "an astute, tyrannous, worldly Sadducee, unvenerable for all his seventy years, and full of a serpentine malice and meanness." His son-in-law Caiaphas "was equally astute and unscrupulous, but endowed with less force of character and will." Avarice was so characteristic a trait in this family, that, apart altogether from the character and claims of Jesus, which stimulated the hatred of the Jews against him, some affirm there were personal reasons which impelled them to condemn him. "It was they who had founded the famous four shops under the twin cedars of Olivet, in which were sold things legally pure, but manipulated with such commercial cunning as artificially to raise the price of doves to a gold coin apiece. There is every reason to believe that the shops which had intruded even under the temple porticoes were not only sanctioned by their authority, but even managed for their profit. To interfere with these," as our Lord had done, "was to rob them of no trifling source of that wealth and worldly comfort to which they attached such extravagant importance."

Before such a tribunal, as might be expected, the forms of trial were a travesty of justice. The object was to secure, if possible, such a ground of accusation as might extort a sentence of capital punishment from the Roman procurator, with whom alone lay the power of life and death. In order to give colour to a charge of blasphemy, two witnesses were suborned who affirmed that they had heard him say he would destroy the temple, but their evidence did not agree. Failing to procure a conviction in this way, Caiaphas demanded,

"Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" a formal challenge of his Messianic claims to which Jesus could not but answer in the affirmative. Upon this, rending his garment with well-simulated horror, the high priest exclaimed, "What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy." And "they answered and said, He is guilty of death." Then arose the wild war of passion in the crowd, and they insulted, spat upon, buffeted, and forced before a Gentile judge the descendant of their long line of kings, the subject of so many prophecies and so many earnest hopes.

Christ before Pilate.

When our Lord was brought before Pilate, the Sanhedrim, in their eagerness to compass his death, quietly withdrew the charge of blasphemy at which Caiaphas feigned to stand aghast, and for the first time accused him of hostility to Rome. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King." (Luke xxiii. 2.) Questions affecting their religion or national hopes they knew would have no weight with the Roman governor: like Gallio in after-times, he would only have derided them as mere questions of "words and names." It was necessary, therefore, to represent to him that his duty to his imperial master demanded the sacrifice of the "King of the Jews." Though he had no personal knowledge of Christ's spiritual aims, Pilate, from his Roman love of justice, was not likely to condemn the innocent. That he would willingly have avoided any share in the sentence pronounced upon our Lord is obvious from his repeated assertions:—"I find in him no fault at all;" "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." The dislike attaching to his administration, however, which had roused every patriotic feeling in Palestine, was adverse to a true and righteous arbitrament of the case. He could only hope to retain some measure of comfort in his position by obliging the chief priests; while, on the other hand, if it were reported at Rome that he was not "Cæsar's friend," the consequences were certain to be disastrous. He had already afforded too good reason for complaint on the part of the people he was sent to rule. He had scarcely assumed his office as procurator, we are told, "when, allowing his soldiers to bring with them by night the silver eagles and other insignia of the legions from Cesarea to the holy city, he excited a furious outburst of Jewish feeling against an act which they regarded as idolatrous profanation. For five days and nights—often lying prostrate on the bare ground—they surrounded and almost stormed his residence at Cesarea with tumultuous and threatening entreaties, and could not be made to desist on the sixth, even by the peril of immediate and indiscriminate massacre at the hands of the soldiers whom he sent to surround them." With such portentous experiences, we can scarcely be surprised that, in the absence of religious principle, Pilate should have sought to re-establish himself in the affections of the Jews, even if it were achieved by "killing the Holy One and the Just."

Yet the resistance which Pilate makes to the clamour of the multitude gives a lasting emphasis and solemnity to the final and fatal rejection of our Lord by the Jewish nation. No expedient is left unattempted to stem the bigotry and intolerance which can only be satisfied with his blood. To appease the malice of his enemies, Pilate orders Jesus to be scourged; then, at the mention of Galilee, he sends him to Herod, who was then in Jerusalem; and finally, in the hope that their voices would be given for his release, he opposes him to Barabbas, who was suffering imprisonment for murder and insurrection; but in vain. The shout rises louder and more terrible, "Not this man, but Barabbas;" "His blood be on us, and on our children;" and, weary with their importunity, "Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." (Luke xxiii. 24.)

The Crucifixion.

We need not follow in detail the progress of the Sufferer, as, with "visage marred more than any man," he hangs upon the cross—henceforth the symbol of salvation and life—with friends "beholding afar off" the poignancy of his anguish,

> "till light forsook his closing eye;'

but, whatever the Roman soldier may add to the indignity of his humiliation, we claim him as our

Lord and God; and, whatever Pilate may write, we read in his passion, "GOD WAS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF, NOT IMPUTING UNTO MEN THEIR TRESPASSES."

One of the fathers beautifully observes, "The heavens knew him, and forthwith sent out a star and a company of angels to sing his birth. The sea knew him, and made itself a way to be trodden by his feet; the earth knew him, and trembled at his dying; the sun knew him, and hid the rays of its light; the rocks knew him, for they were rent in twain; Hades knew him, and gave up the dead it had received. But though the senseless elements perceived him to be their Lord, the hearts of the unbelieving Jews knew him not as God, and, harder than the very rocks, were not rent by repentance."

DIFFUSION OF THE GOSPEL IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

APPARENT TRIUMPH OF THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST.

WITH the crucifixion of our Lord, the malice so persistently cherished towards him by the Jewish council seemed triumphant and complete. At last they had succeeded in silencing the Prophet whose merited and withering rebukes smote on their guilty consciences like a hail of fire. The Healer was removed to whom the woe-worn and weary in Palestine gathered in crowds, that they might share in his compassion, and whose growing popularity was steadily tending to subvert the authority of the Sanhedrim. On the Friday evening which drew its curtain over the tragedy of violence and blood we can believe they experienced a sense of unspeakable relief, and, for the first time for many days, again breathed freely. They had feared to lay hands upon Jesus, lest the people should rise, which might bring them into collision with the Roman governor; but treachery had effected, without risk of danger to their power, what bigotry and subtlety had planned. Henceforth they might rest in confidence that none would dispute with them the spiritual direction and control of their nation. There might be hearts touched by our Lord's tenderness that sorrowed at his grave; Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, with their own hands might prepare Christ's body for burial; he might be laid with the rich in his death, though "he was numbered with the transgressors;" but his form would no more appal them as they profaned the temple of God with a formal and heartless worship. If they confessed, the last day they encountered him in the temple courts, that they prevailed nothing because the world had gone after him, now, at least, he slept securely in the rock-hewn sepulchre. Never again would he summon them to account for the privileges they had scorned, and the sacred trust they had abused. The things concerning him had had an end; the cry he uttered on the cross, "It is finished!" appeared at once to seal the hopes of his friends and the terror of his enemies. "Crucified, dead, and buried"—those solemn words of the creed, which so many generations have repeated, describe not only the anguish and torture inflicted upon his person, but the apparent final extinction of his cause.

How undisturbed was the confidence of the chief priests and rulers is made obvious by the circumstance that, on the morning of Christ's arrest, no attempt was put forth to secure any of his disciples, or prevent them returning to their native province of Galilee. Sometimes, when the leader of a popular movement is cut off, it is felt that little progress is made towards pacifying the public mind till his adherents have been captured. But, according to the evangelists, both St. Peter and St. John, in the early hours of Friday morning, passed in and out of the high priest's hall while our Lord's trial was proceeding; and, except the obtrusive curiosity of menials, no question was asked concerning their participation in his enterprise. Probably their position was deemed too obscure to merit attention. At this time they had displayed none of that wondrous power which afterwards attended them, and it was politic to treat them with contemptuous neglect. The whole energy of the new religion was centred in the ministry of Jesus, and by his apprehension and death might be

regarded as suppressed and vanquished for ever. A few days, the Sanhedrim trusted, and the affair would be forgotten; no fresh disturbance was likely to arise on that subject; and they would dismiss it from their minds as one of the passing marvels of a somewhat portentous time—a brief and painful episode in their strangely chequered history. Yet from this point dates, as Döllinger observes, "the close of the preparation and development of many thousand years, and the starting-point of a new order in the world. The world before Christ, and the world after—that is, and ever must be, the simplest and truest division of history. This beginning contains the powers and secrets of a culture in which there is laid up a wealth of creative ideas, a fulness of new forms in church, in state, in art, in knowledge, and in manners, which are far indeed from being exhausted; nay, which in time to come will bring to light developments in knowledge and in life that as yet we can hardly conjecture."

The Resurrection of our Lord.

Never was boasted assurance proved more baseless by subsequent events than that in which the foes of the Redeemer at this crisis indulged. They presumed they had confronted and crushed the rising force of Christianity, but they were destined ultimately to confess its undying energy. They might indulge, if it pleased them, in visions of tranquillity and peace; but for them, in their transgression and impenitence, there was no peace. It was a "refuge of lies" in which they were entrenching themselves, and though they thought it not, the first impetuous rush of the waters would overflow the hiding-place. They might kill the body, but they could do no more. Right cannot be successfully encountered by might. Purity possesses an immortality against which weapons of war are held in derision.

> "Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
> The eternal years of God are hers."

It was impossible that Christ should long remain in the fetters of death. The Jewish Sabbath passes wearily enough to the stricken disciples. It is "an high day" to those who had been most intimately concerned in consummating the crucifixion. The night advances to the third watch; that is, between midnight and three o'clock in the morning. No precaution has been omitted to maintain the security of the grave—the seal of the chief priests glistens upon it as when it was affixed the day before. Four Roman soldiers sit watching by the door of the tomb, two on each side, while the remaining twelve of which the four quaternions were composed, (Acts xii. 4,) are sleeping or reclining on the ground. Suddenly the earth rocks beneath them, as throe follows throe in awful convulsion; the sleepers are startled and aroused; and in the gloom of early morning there pours a flood of light which changes night to the splendours of noon. In the midst of it is revealed the aspect as of a man whom they dare not oppose, clothed "with a dazzling whiteness like that of snow in the sunbeams," who touches the door of the sepulchre, and it bursts open, and then seems to take his place upon it, as if asserting his right to be its sole and indisputable guard; "and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." (Matt. xxviii. 4.) What more careful and resolute measures could enemies take to prevent the resurrection of "the Prince of Life?" But while they take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, God makes use of their precautions for his own ends: "their stone-covered, seal-secured sepulchre shall preserve the sleeping dust of the Son of God, free from all indignities, in undisturbed, sublime repose; and their watch shall be his guard of honour until the angels shall come to take their place."

Appearances of Christ to the Disciples.

It is not our intention to examine minutely the various appearances which our Lord made to his disciples, to whom "he showed himself alive after his passion" during the forty days he continued with them preparatory to his ascension to the right hand of God. We merely submit an enumeration of them for the reader's guidance and perusal.

1. To exhibit to following ages "the exceeding riches of his grace," Jesus appeared *first* to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. It occurred on the morning of the resurrection, and is recorded in Mark xvi. and John xx.

2. The next was to Cleophas and another of the

disciples on the way to Emmaus. (Mark xvi. 12; Luke xxiv. 13—32.)

3. The third was to Simon Peter, the time and place not being mentioned; but doubtless it was a touching interview between the Lord whom he had denied, and the now deeply penitent apostle. (Luke xxiv. 33—35; 1 Cor. xv. 5.)

4. The next was on the evening of the resurrection to the eleven in the absence of Thomas. (Luke xxiv. 36—43; John xx. 19—25.)

5. The fifth occurred eight days afterwards, when he appeared to the eleven, Thomas now being present. (Mark xvi. 14; John xx. 26—29.)

6. The sixth when he appeared to all or a part of the women who had first visited the sepulchre, and sent a command by them to the disciples to depart into GALILEE. (Matt. xxviii. 9, 10.)

7. The next when he revealed himself to seven of the disciples while fishing on the Lake of Galilee. (John xxi. 1, 2.)

8. The eighth when he appeared to the apostles, and probably to the whole body of the disciples, on a certain mountain in Galilee. There is some ground for believing that this was the mountain which had been the scene of the TRANSFIGURATION. On that occasion our Lord commanded Peter, James, and John to "tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead:" (Matt. xvii. 9:) words probably suggested by the thought that on this very height there would then be what might be regarded as another transfiguration, not privately, but before the assembled body of believers.

9. The ninth appearance was made to James, the Lord's brother, in Galilee. (1 Cor. xv. 7.)

10. The last was on the morning of the ascension, when he appeared to the apostles assembled at Jerusalem. (Luke xxiv. 36—51; Acts i. 4—8.)

It is with the eighth and tenth of these manifestations of our Lord to his followers that we are chiefly concerned in offering a general view of the extension of Christian truth from the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost till St. Paul was able to declare, "From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." (Rom. xv. 19.)

THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSION.

On the first of the two occasions referred to, the meeting on a mountain in Galilee, the apostles receive a COMMISSION, which breaks down all national barriers, and throws salvation wide to mankind. Baptism is instituted as the symbol of a renewed life. It is not the rite administered to Jewish proselytes as the door of their admission to the synagogue, nor that of the forerunner, a mere "baptism unto repentance." It is the emblem of conversion, identifying us with Christ, as the Lord's Supper is the pledge of a holy, Christ-like character, which is only conversion carried on and completed. The MESSAGE which he gives the apostles to deliver to the world is communicated in his own name as Son of God, and promises his continual presence and co-operation:—"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 18—20.)

On the second occasion, that which immediately preceded the ascension, our Lord imparts to the apostles, if we may so speak, the programme of their mission, and directs them to tarry at Jerusalem until they "be endued with power from on high." There is no longer any reticence or concealment as to his great purpose. The gospel he commits to them is "not a somewhat spiritualised Judaism, but in truth the religion of mankind, with no other boundaries than the ends of the world." The disciples speak of restoring "the kingdom to Israel," (Acts i. 6,) which was still their cherished dream; but Jesus contemplates the establishment, through their witness and labours, of a kingdom of truth which shall be the common heritage of all nations. There could be no ampler destination bestowed on Christianity than that suggested by his words:—"YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME BOTH IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA, AND IN SAMARIA, AND UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH." (Acts i. 8.)

Ascension of Christ.

Nothing now remained for our Lord but to enter on the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He had finished the work given him to do; he had prepared the way for the gospel of his love to be preached "to every creature;" and from the slope of Olivet, where the road strikes down to Bethany—hallowed by his most awful sorrow and his deepest joy—in the presence of the eleven, he took his flight on high. "It came to pass, while he blessed them,"—his last act. the influence of which still lingers with us,—"he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Surely our hearts respond to his dawning dominion, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." If angels were transported at his birth into this scene of travail and death, what must have been their ecstasy as they welcomed him "far above all heavens!"

"God is gone up on high
With a triumphant noise:
The clarions of the sky
Proclaim the angelic joys.
Join all on earth, rejoice and sing;
Glory ascribe to glory's King."

THE WORLD-WIDE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL CHRIST'S DESIGN FROM THE BEGINNING.

It has been alleged by some modern writers, whose position towards revelation it would be difficult to define, that our Lord only began to enlarge his plan of operation, and turn his regards towards foreign peoples, when he realised the impossibility of rescuing the Jews, his countrymen, from their political and moral degradation. If "his own" had received him, they presume, he might have suffered the nations beyond "to walk in their own ways." Some scattered intimations in the evangelists, such as that he was "not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (Matt. xv. 24,) appear to favour the suggestion. His personal ministry was confined to Judea; and is not this to be considered, therefore, as the boundary of his design? He takes up his testimony while the Baptist "fulfils his course," he preaches the same message which is employed by the forerunner, he summons Bethsaida and Chorazin to repentance, and weeps over sinful and falling Jerusalem; but does not all this contribute to fix the strictly Judean character of his mission? And if, towards the close of his career, he predicts that, "lifted up" upon the cross, he "will draw all men" unto him, is it not but the turning from an unsuccessful pursuit to one that offers greater certainty of result?

Breadth of our Lord's Character.

The expansiveness and universality of Christ's whole life and aims furnish one of the most cogent proofs of the reality of his Messiahship. He is of "the seed of David," but still more strikingly is he the Son of man. "He was born and grew up a Jew, in the midst of Jews, a people burning with one passion, and throwing their whole souls into the expectation of a national and earthly deliverer. He grew up among them in poverty, seclusion, and labours fitted to contract his thoughts, purposes, and hopes; and yet we find him escaping every influence of education and society. We find him as untouched by the feelings which prevailed universally around him, which religion and patriotism concurred to consecrate, which the mother breathed into the ear of the child, and which the teacher of the synagogue strengthened in the adult, as if he had been brought up in another world. Almost every word he speaks is a death-blow to the hopes and feelings which glowed through the whole people, and were consecrated to them under the name of religion. Not one word is there of Judea, of Rome, of freedom, of conquest, of the subsequent glory and sovereignty of the 'chosen race.'"

Universal Aspect of Christ's Teaching.

These all-embracing features, which give their stamp and complexion to the character of Christ, are reflected in the whole scope and purpose of his ministry. It may be expressed in a clearer and more definite manner as he approaches the limit of his earthly career; but his love for our race, his compassion and tenderness, are visible in it from the commencement. It is broadly marked in his teaching. In the first year

of his public ministry he informs the Samaritan woman that the time was come when merely external worship, whether offered by Jew or Samaritan, should be abolished, and when everywhere God would be worshipped "in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 24.) No words, we think, could intimate more clearly the design of substituting a universal religion in place of the Mosaic ritual, which confined to a single people, in an insignificant portion of the globe, the adoration due to the only God of all. It is to be remarked with what frequency, too, Jesus was accustomed to speak of the approaching fall of the Jewish state, and the overthrow and destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. This comes out in his first Passover, when he cleansed the temple (John ii. 19) on the threshold of his ministry. If he separates the success of his own undertaking from the permanence of the Jewish institute, and regards its removal as an event which would accelerate and diffuse his truth, (Matt. xxiv. 3, comp. with 14,) does there remain a shadow of probability that his object was *merely* to reform the religion of his country? Must he not have formed beforehand the design of breaking, sooner or later, with those who remained attached to the religion of Moses? At last he declares without disguise that he has established a "new covenant," which will supersede the old, and that his sufferings and blood and death are to lay the foundations of this better constitution. (Matt. xxvi. 28.) There could be no more impressive testimony to the world-wide character of his enterprise.

Freedom of Christ's Intercourse with Men.

With his teaching on this subject Christ's personal interest in, and intercourse with, men uniformly correspond. He acts as one who is occupied with a much greater undertaking than that of reforming the religion of Judea. His heart goes out to foreigners, embracing in its generous clasp the whole family of mankind. With all his care in declining to form intimate relations with pagans, lest he might provoke the intolerance of his countrymen, he never objected to their listening to his instructions when opportunity afforded. He is, in fact, reproached with keeping company with publicans and sinners; (Mark ii. 16;) and, according to the language of those times, we are to understand by sinners, not persons, as we should say, of infamous character, but *heathens*, and especially *Romans*. It is likely there were many pagans among the publicans, for the latter were the paid servants of the Roman government. Those of Tyre and Sidon, on the shores of the Mediterranean, who came to listen to him, were probably, for the most part, heathens. (Mark vii. 24.)

The same extended concern for man, as such, comes out in his parables and occasional discourses. The sower (Matt. xiii. 38) who sows the good grain, which is afterwards found mingled with tares, has as his field, not Palestine alone, nor those countries which are inhabited by Jews—"the field is the world." To Nicodemus he declares, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." (John iii. 16.) So he is the bread of life which is given "for the life of the world." (John vi. 51.) A few days before his death, when a woman of Bethany anointed him, he assured his disciples that "wheresoever this gospel shall be preached *in the whole world*, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." (Matt. xxvi. 13.) And in the intercessory prayer which he offered as he was advancing to the agony and the crucifixion, he begs that his disciples may be one, that the world may believe that God has sent him. (John xvii. 21.)

"Contrary to every religious prejudice of his nation, and even of his time; contrary to the comparatively narrow and exclusive religion of Moses itself, and to all his training under it, he undertakes to organize a kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven on earth. His purpose includes a new moral creation of the race—not of the Jews only, and of men proselyted to their covenant, but of the whole human race. He declared thus, at an early date in his ministry, that many shall come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. No human creature sits down quietly to a perpetual and universal project, one that proposes to be executed only at the end or final harvest of the world. This is not human, but Divine!" Yet this, in all its amplitude and scope, is the enterprise of Christ, and its final and triumphant issues he distinctly asserts from the first moments of his public life.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD.

The labours of the apostles, though following a regular order, afford but few notices of time which can assist us to a clear and well-defined conception of the period. The data given in the earlier portion of Acts are to a great extent uncertain, but towards the close of the book, when St. Luke joins St. Paul, the chronology becomes more fixed and obvious. Two exact dates are recorded in the Epistle to the Galatians. There the apostle refers to two visits which he made to Jerusalem. (Gal. i. 18, ii. 1.) The first of them is identical with that mentioned in Acts ix. 26, when "he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." The second probably corresponds with the visit mentioned in Acts xv., which took place fourteen years after his conversion. In all, five visits of the apostle to Jerusalem are recorded in Acts:— 1, when he escaped from Damascus; (Acts ix. 26;) 2, when he came with the collection from Antioch for the saints; (Acts xi. 30;) 3, the visit to the council of Jerusalem; (Acts xv.;) 4, on his return from his second missionary journey; (Acts xviii. 21;) 5, his last visit to Jerusalem. (Acts xxi. 12, 13.) The second visit, spoken of in Gal. ii. 1, has occasioned no little controversy among critics; some, like Paley, assuming that it relates to a journey not mentioned in Acts, while others, with greater probability, regard it as the third of the visits just referred to. Conybeare very properly says, "The Galatian visit could not have happened *before* the third visit" to Jerusalem, "because the apostles in that city had already granted to Paul and Barnabas the liberty which was sought for,' viz. to preach 'the gospel of the uncircumcision;' (Gal. ii. 7;) therefore there would have been no need for the church to send them again to Jerusalem upon the same cause. And again, the Galatian visit could not have happened *after* the third visit; because, almost immediately after that period, Paul and Barnabas ceased to work together as missionaries to the Gentiles; whereas, up to the time of the Galatian visit, they had been working together." The precise date of Paul's conversion to Christ is involved in some uncertainty.

Historical Events which serve to mark the Period.

There are several historical facts more or less distinctly referred to in the Acts, which serve as landmarks in the epoch of the apostles, and which are also mentioned by Jewish and Roman historians. Principal among these are the death of Herod Agrippa I., (Acts xii. 20—23,) the famine which occurred in the reign of Claudius, (Acts xi. 28,) the expulsion of the Jews from Rome, (Acts xviii. 2,) and the procuratorships of Felix and Festus. (Acts xxiv. 27.)

The death of Herod Agrippa can be determined with absolute certainty. The grandson of Herod the Great, on the decease of his uncle Philip, his tetrarchy of the northern districts beyond Jordan was bestowed on him by the Emperor Caligula, who added to this token of his friendship the title of king. A desire on the part of Herod Antipas to possess a like mark of imperial favour was represented by his nephew as an act of treason, and thus Agrippa obtained in addition the tetrarchy of Galilee, from which Antipas was deposed. When Caligula fell a victim to a conspiracy in his own household on the 24th of January, A.D. 41, "his attached friend, the Jew Agrippa," who was then in Rome, "threw a cloak over the body, which he presently burnt and buried in haste; and the ashes were afterwards honoured with funeral rites by the sisters of the emperor." The zeal and fidelity which he evinced in the interests of Caligula he was not slow in transferring to his successor, Claudius, who rewarded his services with the remaining division of the now reunited dominion of Herod the Great. Josephus observes that Agrippa reigned three years under Claudius after receiving from him the sovereignty formerly possessed by his grandfather, and, as the accession of Claudius took place in the early part of 41, it is clear the death of Herod must have occurred some time in the year 44 of the Christian era, according to the usual reckoning.

The recall of Felix from the procuratorship of

Judea, and the appointment of Porcius Festus in his room, are data which can be determined with little likelihood of error. On the departure of Felix, whom Tacitus describes as "wielding the power of a king in the spirit of a slave," the Jewish population of Cesarea sent deputies to Rome to accuse him to Nero; but, according to Josephus, he escaped punishment through the influence of his brother Pallas, who was a favourite of the emperor. (*Ant.* xx. 8, 9.) But the deputation must have reached Rome before A.D. 62, for in that year Tacitus says Nero put Pallas to death. (*Ann.* xiv. 65.) Burrus, who obtained a decree depriving the Jewish citizens of Cesarea of their rights, was alive when the accusers of Felix arrived at Rome; but he died in March, 62. Hence the removal of Felix must have been accomplished before A.D. 62. But further, Josephus affirms that, a short time before the entrance of Festus on the procuratorship, the Jews sent a deputation to Rome concerning a matter in dispute between them and the governor, and that judgment was given in their favour to gratify Poppæa, the wife of Nero. Now certainly this could not have happened earlier than the year 62, for Tacitus represents Poppæa as becoming Nero's wife in that year. (*Ann.* xiv. 60.) Allowing some time for the dispute to arise, and the sending of the deputation, it is difficult to conceive that Festus could have been made procurator before the year 60. The best chronologists agree in believing that Felix was dismissed and Festus nominated as his successor in A.D. 60.

General Chronological Table.

For facility of reference we subjoin a table of the Roman emperors and contemporary governors of Judea, with the chief events of the apostolic era mentioned in Acts which fall under their respective periods. We give the year of our Lord according to the ordinary reckoning.

Emperors.	Governors of Judea.	Events in Acts of Apostles.
A.D. 33 Tiberius.	Pontius Pilate	Pentecost. Descent of Holy Spirit.
34–35		Events recorded in Acts iii.—vi. 7.
36		Stoning of Stephen; missionary labours in Samaria.
37–39 Caligula	Marullus	Conversion of Paul, Acts ix. 1-19.
40		Paul's first visit to Jerusalem; he retires to Tarsus. Acts ix. 23—31.
41–43 Claudius	King Herod Agrippa I.	Labours of Peter; conversion of Cornelius; church at Antioch. Acts ix. 32—xi.
44	Cuspius Fadus	Death of Herod; Paul's second visit to Jerusalem. Acts xii.
45–47	Tiberius Alexander	Paul's first missionary journey. Acts xiii., xiv.
48–50	Ventidius Cummanus	Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, where they abode a long time with the disciples. Acts xiv.
51	Felix	Council of Jerusalem; third visit of Paul; commencement of his second missionary journey. Acts xv.—xvi. 5.
52		Paul in Macedonia and Achaia. Acts xvi. 6—xviii.
53		Paul at Corinth. Acts xviii. 1—17.
54–56 Nero		Paul's fourth visit to Jerusalem; Paul's third missionary journey, commencing at Pentecost, 54; he resides at Ephesus nearly three years. Acts xviii. 18—xix. 20.
57		Paul leaves Ephesus at Pentecost, and passes the winter at Corinth. Acts xix. 21—xx. 3.
58		Paul's fifth journey to Jerusalem, which he reaches at Pentecost; his arrest and imprisonment. Acts xx. 4—xxiv. 26.
59		Paul a prisoner in Cesarea. Acts xxiv. 26, 27.
60	Festus	Paul's defence before Agrippa; in the autumn he sails for Rome, and passes the winter at Malta. Acts xxv.—xxviii. 10.
61		Paul's arrival at Rome in the spring. Acts xxviii. 11—29.
62	Albinus	Paul a prisoner at Rome. Acts xxviii. 30.
63		Close of Paul's two years' imprisonment. Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

FROM THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST TO THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN. A.D. 33—36, ORDINARY RECKONING.

"To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Such was in effect the destination assigned by our Lord to the conflicts and triumph of his truth, though the apostles as a body, fettered by their prejudices, were so slow to recognise it. It was difficult for them to believe that the Gentiles, held in disesteem and contempt, should become fellow-heirs in privilege with the descendants of the patriarchs. The Jewish nation alone, in their judgment, was the "flock" of God, and they could not as yet extend their sympathies to embrace the "other sheep" of which Jesus had spoken, which were "not of this fold." If the limitations which they cherished had been permitted to prevail, there could have been no rallying of the mighty outlying populations of earth to light and salvation. During the ten days that intervened between the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and for long after, they exhibited no disposition to break with the Hebrew tradition and ritual. They continued "daily with one accord in the temple;" (Acts ii. 46;) they regularly mingled in its worship at the appointed hours of service. (Acts iii. 1.) There needed some signal and striking demonstration from heaven to convince them that all barriers were now broken down; that the "house"—the temple—"was left desolate," according to Christ's prediction, and a new centre of communion set up, around which their devotion and aspirations were to gather.

The Upper Room.

This was foreshadowed, in part at least, by the place where the foundations of the Christian kingdom were laid—"the upper room" (Acts i. 13) where the disciples were assembled "when the day of Pentecost was fully come." Other revelations of Divine compassion or power had generally been made in the temple: this took place within no consecrated precinct. As the scene of the Last Supper, it must have been sacred in their eyes, but it had no glory attaching to it in the estimation of their countrymen. It has been suggested, indeed, that the disciples were gathered together, when the gift of tongues was conferred upon them, in one of the many chambers of the temple which were usually devoted to religious instruction and other pious objects; but there is little probability that the apostles could have obtained admittance to these if their purpose were known, or continued their prayers and efforts without being exposed to hostility and violence. It was plainly signified, by the "baptism of fire" in this unconsecrated spot, that the old worship on Mount Moriah was superseded by a better dispensation, and that henceforth, in contrast with former times, the true temple and the true God would be found where the worshipper, without distinction of nation or colour, poured forth his heart "in spirit and in truth."

The third hour,—nine in the morning,—when the miracle occurred, was one of the recognised times of public prayer. Multitudes, therefore, would be thronging all the porches of the temple, and the event would collect crowds that wondered, (Acts ii. 12,) or, under the searching appeal of Peter, did more than wonder—wept in contrition.

Gift of Tongues.

The design of this miracle, and its appropriate symbol, a tongue, not only defined the agency by which Christ's purpose was to be fulfilled, but placed the first messengers of the gospel in living contact with the wants and sympathies of mankind. Conquerors might take the sword, but they were to overcome by the power of their testimony. The confusions of Babel were undone in this accession to their gifts—the channel opened through which the life-giving currents of salvation were to be communicated to the remotest ends of the earth. Men—not Judah as distinguished from Israel, or Jew as opposed to Samaritan or barbarian, but men as such, Crete and Arabian—for the first time heard in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. "In strict keeping with this spiritual stamp of Christianity was the symbol which once for all announced to the church the advent of her conquering power. The symbol of a TONGUE, the only instrument of the grandest war ever waged: a *tongue*—man's speech to his fellow-man; a message in human words

to human faculties, from the understanding to the understanding, from the heart to the heart. A tongue *of fire*—man's voice, God's truth; man's speech, the Holy Spirit's power! Not one tongue, but cloven tongues; as the speech of men is various, here we see the Creator taking to himself the language of every man's mother; so that in the very words wherein he heard her say, 'I love thee,' he might also hear the Father of all say, 'I love thee.'"

Effects of Peter's Sermon.

Peter's sermon on the occasion, (Acts ii. 14—36,) which may be looked upon as a type of apostolic preaching generally, is far removed from the artifice and gaudy rhetoric taught in schools of eloquence. He is unversed in the modes of Æschines and Demosthenes, who shook the Agora with their thunders. His message is the truth of God, sublime in its simplicity, proclaimed with all the earnestness of his impetuous nature, and made mighty and irresistible by the power of the Holy Ghost. There are miracles transpiring around him, but he refers not to them; there is the crowning sign of Christ's resurrection fresh in their minds, but he does not lay the chief weight of his argument upon that; his is a statement of facts confirming the prophecies of their Scriptures, with which they might be presumed to be familiar. Jesus of Nazareth rejected by their nation, by wicked hands crucified and slain, but raised again from the dead by the power of God, and now exalted and acknowledged to be "both Lord and Christ"—they have to confront him, to answer for their impenitence to him. Every word is a shaft which cleaves its way to their hearts. To them has come, as to so many others,

> "the moment to decide,
> In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side."

His message is unwelcome, he addresses himself to no favourable audience, he wields no stately oratory, but he produces an effect never recorded before in the history of mankind. It is not tastes that are gratified, but souls which are carried captive. "Here a head bows; there starts a groan; yonder rises a deep sigh; here tears are falling; and some stern old Jew, who will neither bow nor weep, trembles with the effort to keep himself still. At length, from the depth of the crowd, the voice of the preacher is crossed by a cry, as if one was 'mourning for his only son;' and it is answered by another cry, as if one was in 'bitterness for his first-born.' At this cry the whole multitude is carried away, and, forgetful of everything but the overwhelming feeling of the moment, they exclaim, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts ii. 37.)

It was thus Christianity won her first triumphs on apparently the most unpromising field, by her unequivocal and earnest witness to the sacrifice of her Lord. The "handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains" furnished on Pentecost a richer sheaf than any that was waved in the harvest festival in the temple. "Three thousand souls" professed their devotion to the person and faith of the Messiah. Not many days after, by another discourse of Peter, the number was increased to five thousand. (Acts iv. 4.) There were "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord" was come "in the valley of decision."

In Acts ii. 46, 47, we have a passing, but beautiful glimpse of the purity and singleness of purpose of the early church, which shows that her aggressions upon the world were the result of interior holiness and energy. The sweetness of her communion, her harmony and unselfishness, present such a spectacle "as earth saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see." When there are once more Pentecostal prayerfulness and efforts that know no weariness, there will again be Pentecostal victories, which will crown Christ "with many crowns." We may be certain, as has been said, that "God is as full of revivals as the sun is full of summers."

Hostility of the Sanhedrim.

It was scarcely to be expected that the attention naturally attracted to the apostles and their followers during the feast in Jerusalem would escape the vigilance of the Sanhedrim. The thing was not done in a corner; the "favour" with which the people received the message of repentance and life could not fail to make them tremble for their spiritual power. The day was past when they could treat the fresh move-

ments of thought in Judea with supercilious contempt. The ground on which they had reared the proud structure of their ecclesiastical authority was giving way beneath their feet. They had trusted that with the death of our Lord there would be a termination of his influence, but they were battling fruitlessly with an ocean tide. The wave which seemed to recede at the crucifixion was returning with more formidable crest, as if eager to challenge their antagonism. They were exasperated beyond measure, and, as appears by their questionings, baffled and perplexed by the unexpected turn events were taking. "What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them"—the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple—"is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it." (Acts iv. 16.) As on similar occasions, the answer they determined upon was violence and persecution. But in the passive endurance of the apostles they encountered a weapon against which their vaunted superiority was vain. "Their readiness to meet suffering and ill-treatment declared that their cause was not to be crushed. There is no graver mistake than for a persecuted people to offer material as well as moral resistance; this is to subject themselves to the chances of strength, to the risks of a struggle of which the issue is always uncertain. He who takes the sword deserves to perish by the sword, for he implicitly admits the right of the strongest. Moral resistance, on the contrary, knows no chances, no risks. It is linked to an immortal principle, and destined to certain triumph." Threatening is had recourse to with Peter and John, but it avails not to move them from their purpose. Imprisonment is tried, but they rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. It was an important crisis in the history of both the persecutors and the persecuted. There is no cowardice on the part of the heralds of the Cross—no treacherous timidity, such as beset them in Gethsemane—they cast down the gauntlet, to be lifted by him who dares: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts iv. 19, 20.)

Gamaliel, his Reputation and Counsel.

It will be remarked by the reader that, of the two parties composing the Sanhedrim, the Sadducees here first come into prominence. They were the less considerable in numbers of the two great factions into which the spiritual leaders of the Jews were divided. During the life of our Lord it was the Pharisees who most vehemently opposed him; it was against their pretentiousness and authority that his rebukes were chiefly directed; and by their jealousy, which tracked his footsteps and sought to "entangle him in his talk," he was accused, calumniated, and finally put to death. Now, to our surprise, it is the Sadducees who come to the front, and labour to compass the destruction of Christianity. This may be accounted for, in part, by internal dissensions in the council—there were friends of Christ there, as we know, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; but doubtless the main reason was the triumphant assertion of the resurrection, which occupied a large space in the apostles' testimony. This touched the sect of the Sadducees in the tenderest point, "for the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both." (Acts xxiii. 8.) The severity with which, when in power, they administered the law, which tended to make them obnoxious to the people, doubtless contributed to produce a reaction in the apostles' favour. (Acts iv. 21.) Annas and Caiaphas were desirous, apparently, to press a capital charge against their prisoners; but Gamaliel, the leader of the Pharisees, intervened in their behalf, and the wrath of man was made to praise God. "The Jewish writers concur with the sacred historian in testifying to the estimation in which this remarkable man was held, not only by the learned, but by the common people. He was called the 'Beauty of the law,' and it is a saying of the Talmud that 'since Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the law hath ceased.' He died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and retained his popularity to the last. He was held in such estimation among the Jews, that seventy pounds weight of perfumes were burned at his funeral." He is best known to us as the teacher of the future apostle of the Gentiles. (Acts xxii. 3.) Whether, as tradition affirms, the bearing of

the disciples, and the wisdom with which they spoke, made some impression on a man not wholly prejudiced, while their opposition to Sadduceeism must have prepossessed him towards them, so that he afterwards professed the Christian faith, we cannot with certainty determine. But to him, under God, it is owing that the bark of the church was not swamped at its first setting out, and his words will for ever remain an assertion of religious toleration, the more valuable from the quarter whence it emanated: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." (Acts v. 38, 39.) For the moment the blow was averted; but the curtain was soon to rise on scenes of violence and bloodshed.

Special Mission of Stephen.

An army about to attack an enemy sends out a reconnoitring party to note the dispositions of the opposing force. Those who are thus sent require to be men of tried resolution and valour, for their position exposes them to the first droppings of "the hail of death." Similar was the mission committed to Stephen, one of the seven Deacons, in the advancement of early Christianity. Hitherto the teaching of the apostles seems to have been confined to the temple. With the election of the deacons an appeal was made to the synagogues, of which a large number existed in Jerusalem. Those which are mentioned in Acts vi. 9 were composed of Hellenistic Jews, "Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia." The Jews were at this period widely dispersed throughout all parts of the Roman Empire. Josephus informs us that one-fourth of the inhabitants of Cyrene were Jews, who had been settled there by Ptolemy Lagus. (*Ant.* xiv. 7, 2.) According to Philo, two of the five parts into which Alexandria—then the second city of the Empire—was divided were called the Jewish quarters. (*In Flacc.*) With these foreign Jews—who came up to the capital at the great annual feasts, and worshipped in their synagogues, much as resident Greeks, Italians, and others have their own churches and chapels in London and our larger cities—Stephen, who was himself a Hellenist, entered into communication, with the view of commending to them the gospel of Christ. Among them he might hope to find a greater breadth and liberality of sentiment than among his countrymen who had their abode in Jerusalem. It is clear that his views of the destination of the kingdom of Christ were more advanced than those which were at that time entertained by the apostles. Their vision as yet extended not beyond their own nation, which might be converted, might become Christian; but it would still be peculiar in privilege, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." Stephen was the first to announce that the institutions of Moses were to be abolished, that to the Gentiles might be "granted repentance unto life." The lines within which the church had been working were to be extended progressively, till all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of God. Hence, when his enemies laid their toils for Stephen and sought to arrest his testimony, they accused him of speaking "blasphemous words against Moses, and against God." (Acts vi. 11.) Up till this time the believers were rather favourably regarded by the people. The Pharisees were neutral, if not disposed to conciliate them; the great antagonists of the Christians were the Sadducees. But now a fatal reverse occurs—the masses of the people become alienated and hostile. Lange remarks, "Until the time of the election of Stephen the Pharisees were somewhat favourably inclined towards the preaching of the Risen One; the popular voice was on the side of the Christians; and it was a very favourable symptom that 'a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith.' Everything seemed to promise that all Israel would be converted. But entirely different was the state of matters after the appearance of Stephen. He, in his discourses, brought prominently forward the insufficiency of the Jewish law and the temple; and from this time we see the Pharisaical party united with the Sadducees in bitter hostility against the Christians."

Martyrdom of Stephen.

It is unnecessary to recount the circumstances of Stephen's martyrdom. If his accusers charged him

with affirming that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple, and change the customs which Moses delivered them, (Acts vi. 14,) God vouchsafed him such a token of his approbation as he gave to Moses when he came down from the mount. He

> " Looking upward, full of grace,
> Beheld, and from a happy place,
> *God's glory smote him in the face.*"

The sudden rush of the multitude, who "cast him out of the city, and stoned him," before any judicial sentence had been pronounced against him, it has been suggested, identifies the era of his martyrdom as the time of the deposition of Pilate, A.D. 36. In a temporary suspension of public authority, such an act of lawlessness and murder can be more readily understood.

But though the messenger falls, the word he has spoken remains. The death of Stephen, in causing the dispersion of the disciples, accomplished in a more signal manner the design for which he was specially raised up—the preaching of the faith to the Gentiles. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." (Acts viii. 4.) And there was standing by the victim of Jewish hate a man who was to catch the glorious thought which inflamed his zeal, and use it for the casting down with a strong hand of the barrier existing between Judaism and the surrounding world. Saul of Tarsus heard Stephen's defence with the indignation of a Pharisee; but, in the midst of his anger, "God darted into his soul one of those piercing goads which cannot long be resisted. The memory of that day never faded from his mind. The redoubling of his persecuting zeal denotes the disquiet of his spirit. Beautifully says Augustine, 'If Stephen had not prayed and suffered, the church had not had Saul.'"

FROM PHILIP'S EVANGELISTIC LABOURS IN SAMARIA TO PAUL'S FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM. A.D. 36—40.

The Gospel in Samaria.

The persecution begun by the Sanhedrim which culminated in the death of Stephen, by scattering the disciples, at once enlarged the sphere of their activity and the scope of their design. They now for the first time went forth to encounter heathenism with its false worships, which sought to unite in its uncertain beliefs the East and the West. The city in Samaria in which Philip, one of the seven deacons, confronted this adversary is not mentioned. If it had been the old city of Samaria, which was rebuilt by Herod the Great, it would have had the definite article placed before it. Alford, with much probability, supposes the city of Shechem, where our Lord himself preached, and so prepared the way for the introduction of Christianity, is intended. (John iv. 5.) Samaria was not actually a heathen country, though the Jews held its people in as great abhorrence as pagan nations. Its population was composed of the descendants of the ten tribes, and a colony of foreigners who were brought hither by Shalmaneser. (2 Kings xvii. 24.) When the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity took place, the Samaritans sought to take part in the rebuilding of the temple. (Ezra iv. 1, 2.) Their offer was rejected with indignation. They then determined to erect a temple to Jehovah on Mount Gerizim. Like their neighbours the Jews, they shared in the consequences of the revolution in Asia Minor. During the reign of the Maccabees their temple was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, but Mount Gerizim continued still to be to them a holy place. Ultimately they fell under the dominion of the Romans, and experienced similar political fluctuations to the Jews. Various causes tended to deepen the hatred existing between the two contiguous nations. Josephus says, "The Samaritans deny their Hebrew origin when the Jews are in distress, but as soon as prosperity comes to them they are eager to appeal to their common ancestry in Joseph and Manasseh." (*Ant.* ix. 14, 3.) As the period of the Old-Testament prophets commenced just at the time of their separation from the Jews, the Samaritans were strangers to their predictions—with the glowing future they portray. They acknowledged

only the five books of Moses, and, with the exception of a small minority, denied the resurrection of the dead. (Origen, *Hom.* xxv. 1.) Grimm observes, "Their Messianic hopes were even more materialistic than those of the Jews, if we may credit the few Samaritans who still live among the ruins of their country, and who appear to have faithfully kept their ancient traditions. According to them, Messiah is to reign over all nations, to restore the holy law, to rebuild the temple on Gerizim, and to insure the universal triumph of Moses."

We have convincing evidence in the Gospels of the rooted antipathy which the Jews cherished towards this people. The most hateful name which the enemies of Christ could find for him was that of a Samaritan. (John viii. 48.) The woman of Sychar was amazed that a Jew should condescend to speak to her. (John iv. 9.) The Talmud declares that it is forbidden to an Israelite to break bread with a Samaritan:— "He who takes the bread of a Samaritan is like him who eats the flesh of swine. No Israelite may receive a Samaritan as a proselyte; this accursed people shall have no part in the resurrection of the dead."

Among a race so abandoned and hopeless, the gospel, as preached by Philip, was shown to be "the power of God unto salvation." The scenes which marked our Lord's ministry in Galilee in the days of his flesh were repeated here; "for unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed." (Acts viii. 7.) It was seen that if there was no difference in human need, there was none either in the adaptation of Divine love to meet the moral and spiritual requirements of men.

Simon the Magian.

One figure stands forth conspicuously in this first effort to break down the exclusiveness of Judaism: it is Simon the sorcerer, around whom ecclesiastical history has accumulated such a wealth of tradition. He gave himself out as "the great power of God;" (Acts viii. 10;) but, as the rods of Pharaoh's magicians were impotent in the presence of Moses, so Simon could prevail nothing against the earnestness of Philip. His influence in Samaria was due, probably, to the fact that the times were in the throe of a great religious crisis; the prophecies concerning the Messiah were spread abroad; and hence many impostors took advantage of the expectation, and deceived the people. Sorcery was encountered again at Paphos in Elymas, who was in attendance on Sergius Paulus. (Acts xiii. 6, 7.) "These men went about as sorcerers, and deceived the people with magical arts, perhaps by possessing a superior knowledge of the laws of nature, especially of chemistry." Eusebius says that Simon took the lead in all heresy; and the fathers generally regard him as the founder of Gnosticism.

Gradual Removal of the Barrier between Jew and Gentile.

Tidings of the reception of the gospel were conveyed to Jerusalem, where the apostles still abode, (Acts viii. 1,) and Peter and John went down to Samaria to witness the descent of the Holy Spirit on these new converts, as on themselves at the beginning. This is the last time John's name occurs in the Acts of the Apostles.

A mighty step in the expansion of Christian thought was taken in the founding of the church in Samaria. When the apostles determined to visit it, they must have risen above the most inveterate prejudices of their period and their people. They were to be led, by a transition of the Saviour's own appointing, to carry the word of reconciliation throughout the whole world. The brief ministry of Stephen and his tragic end were to them the crossing of a Rubicon which was never to be retraced

> "Till each remotest nation
> Has learned Messiah's name."

The evangelistic labours of Philip beyond the limits of Israel were still further honoured by the accession of another convert of distinction and influence. An officer, a eunuch holding a position of high rank and importance at the court of Meroë, who had been to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning in his chariot, was led by his direction and teaching to the faith of Christ. The name of Candace, (Acts viii. 27,) Pliny says, was not the particular name of this individual queen, but a titular distinction of the queens of Meroë, like Pharaoh and Ptolemy in Egypt, and Cæsar

in Rome. "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

Partial results like these were not without their influence, but they scarcely more than touched the immensely outspread area of pagan superstition and idolatry. An agent was still wanting to give energy and effect to the Divine purpose of evangelizing the world. So long as the apostles, who continued at Jerusalem, restricted their labours within the lines of Judaism, it was not to be expected that an impulse would be exerted upon the Gentiles sufficiently powerful "to turn them from darkness to light." To proclaim Christianity in the West, where shrines of many deities held longing souls in thraldom, and where the widest and most abiding conquests were to be gained for the Redeemer, probably required a man of broader vision and more varied culture than the fishermen of Galilee. God raised up such an instrument, not in the circle of the church, but in that of her most embittered and relentless adversaries.

Conversion of St. Paul.

Next to the effusion of the Holy Ghost on the disciples at Pentecost, the most important event in the history of primitive Christianity was the conversion of St. Paul, of which there are three separate accounts in the Acts. (Chaps. ix., xxii., xxvi.) From his early youth every association of his life had rigidly attached him to the tenets and practice of the Pharisees. It has been supposed, from his name Saul, which means "desired" or "asked for," that he was piously devoted by his parents in childhood to God, and that with this view he was sent from Tarsus to Jerusalem to prosecute those sacred studies the teaching of which was to form the occupation of his riper years. Of this nothing, of course, can be affirmed with certainty, but his mind had a natural bias for such acquirements. In his native city he could not fail to receive an intellectual stimulus. Strabo informs us that literary and philosophical pursuits had been carried so far at Tarsus, that the schools of Cilicia eclipsed even those of Athens and Alexandria. Paul's familiarity with several of the Greek poets, whose writings he quotes,—Menander, (1 Cor. xv. 33,) Aratus, (Acts xvii. 28,) and Epimenides, (Titus i. 12,)—may be attributed with confidence to the instruction and influences of his boyhood. On the other hand, his education at Jerusalem under Gamaliel, the most famous rabbi of his time, communicated to him that austerity of life and unshaken fidelity to the traditions of the fathers, which appear so conspicuous during the period of his persecuting zeal. He was singularly fitted to become the "apostle of the uncircumcision," for he had sympathy with both Jew and Greek: "he stood, as it were, on the confines of both regions, qualified beyond all men to develop a system which should unite both under one more harmonious and comprehensive faith."

Armed with letters of authority from the chief priests to search the synagogues of Damascus, whither, we are told, many of the disciples had fled when the persecution burst forth in which Stephen was sacrificed, he began his journey with the resolution of extirpating the very name of Christ. Damascus lies about one hundred and forty miles north-east of Jerusalem, and is situated on a wide fertile plain or oasis, surrounded on all sides by the desert. It is one of the oldest places mentioned in history, its name occurring in Scripture as early as the time of Abraham. So many Jews ordinarily resided here that, as Josephus tells us, during the Jewish war ten thousand of them were massacred in a single hour. (*Wars*, ii. 20, 2.) Saul may have fixed upon Damascus as the theatre of his hatred and vengeance, on account of the multitude of Christians converted at Pentecost who had taken refuge there. Lange suggests, besides, that "it was the gate to the dispersed Jews of the east in Mesopotamia, Babylon, and Assyria; and it may have appeared to him above all things necessary that this gate should be closed."

His motives, we cannot doubt, were sincere, however greatly mistaken. He was not actuated by the malicious meanness which impelled the Pharisees generally in their opposition to Christianity. In the hour of his most truculent onslaught he thought he was "doing God service." He was not permitted, however, to accomplish the destruction he contemplated. "Exceedingly mad" against the faithful, "breathing forth threatenings and slaughter," he was himself constrained to confess the truth whose votaries he was hastening to bind and destroy. At noontide

on the sixth day, as he approached the city, a glory from heaven shone upon him "beyond the brightness of the sun," and dated the noontide of a better splendour in his soul. The sudden, we might say almost instantaneous, character of the change wrought upon him is seen in the question he asks—"Who art thou, Lord?" which swiftly passes into the prayer, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 5, 6.) The dread with which he was regarded by the Christians when he reached Damascus, and subsequently in Jerusalem, testifies at once to the horror which his name inspired, and the completeness of his surrender. As Hackett observes, "The sudden appearance of Voltaire in a circle of Christians, claiming to be one of them, would have been something like the return of Saul to Jerusalem as a professed disciple."

Beyond the glimpse we obtain of him immediately after these events, as he "preached Christ in the synagogues" of Damascus "that he is the Son of God," we know little of his history for the next three years, which were passed in Arabia, (Gal. i. 17,) preparing himself by prayer and meditation for the mighty work awaiting him. How the period was spent we may gather somewhat from his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, xii. 1—4.

At the end of this interval, returning to Jerusalem by way of Damascus, he was introduced by Barnabas, a native of Cyprus, and his future companion in his first missionary journey, to Peter and James, (Gal. i. 18, 19,) and received their fullest and most cordial recognition of his mission. The hour was come, and the messenger, fraught with such promise and salvation to mankind.

MISSIONARY EFFORTS OF PETER. FORMATION OF THE GENTILE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH. A.D. 41—45.

Up to the point at which we have arrived, we find Christianity confined to the Hebrew and Hellenistic Jews, proselytes to the Jewish faith, and the Samaritans, who in so many matters of religious practice closely resembled them. The Christians might, therefore, be mistaken for a Jewish sect, differing only from their countrymen in their conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised to the fathers. Now it was to be made manifest that the message of the apostles had a wider range. It was to embrace the Gentiles, however remote from its centre. Existing restrictions were to be overthrown, and the universal destination of the gospel placed beyond controversy. It may seem strange to us that this was not immediately recognised by the apostles, especially since the call of the Gentiles was a great part of the burden of Old-Testament prophecy, and the subject of our Lord's repeated and plainest intimations. They had no doubt that the Gentiles were to be received into the brotherhood of the church; they must have acknowledged it as the commission of Christ that they should "preach the gospel to every creature." They assumed, however, that the gathering of the Gentiles would be effected through the medium of Judaism, and that, in order to their reception, they must be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses. A few of the evangelists, like Stephen and Philip, no doubt entertained more liberal views, but even they do not seem to have attempted the direct conversion of pagans. It required a Divine revelation to overcome their scruples. Circumcision was of Divine appointment, and the uncircumcised were required to be "cut off" from among the people. The law of Moses was received "by the disposition of angels," and our Lord himself had said that he came not to destroy, but to fulfil it. It seemed imperative, therefore, that the church should be taught by a direct example that the law of Moses was fulfilled in Christ, that legal privileges and restrictions were abolished, and that the Gentiles could be admitted into the kingdom of God without circumcision. "Nothing," says Milman, "is more remarkable than to see the horizon of the apostles gradually receding, and, instead of resting on the borders of the Holy Land, comprehending at length the whole world; barrier after barrier falling down before the superior wisdom which

was infused into their minds; first the proselytes of the gate, the foreign conformists to Judaism, and ere long the Gentiles themselves, admitted within the pale; until Christianity stood forth, demanding the homage, and promising its rewards to the faith of the whole human race, proclaiming itself in language which the world had as yet never heard, the one true, universal religion."

The opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles was committed to Peter, who had first preached the gospel at Pentecost to the Jews. At Cesarea lived a devout centurion, one of the class of Gentiles so numerous in the apostolic age, who, dissatisfied with the religious worship of his ancestors, was attracted to the purer religion of the Jews. He had cast off from him the debasing observances of idolatry, and become a worshipper of the true God. He was not ignorant of the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. There is no evidence that he was a "proselyte of the gate," as has been hastily assumed. In this case the apostle would scarcely have spoken of him as a man "of another nation," with whom it was unlawful for "a Jew to keep company." (Acts x. 28.) He may have learnt somewhat of Christ from the lips of Philip, who had been already in Cesarea preaching the gospel. (Acts viii. 44.) "He knew the history of Jesus so far as it was spread abroad: he knew that no small part of the Jews recognised him as the Messiah, and that a division upon this question agitated his co-religionists; and probably his own soul was agitated by the same inquiry, and he longed after a true solution from above." Moved by this impulse, he betook himself to prayer, and it was revealed to him in a vision to send for Peter, who was then at Joppa; while almost simultaneously it was notified to the apostle, similarly occupied, that he was to go, nothing doubting, to Cesarea with the messengers of Cornelius.

"The saint beside the ocean prayed,
The soldier in his chosen bower,
Where all his eye surveyed
Seemed sacred in that hour.

To each unknown his brother's prayer—
Yet brethren true in dearest love
Were they—and now they share
Fraternal joys above."

We are not left in ignorance as to the issue of Peter's visit. The miracle of Pentecost was repeated on Cornelius and his household. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." (Acts x. 44.) The death of Stephen was bearing its fruits, and a career wide as the world was opening to apostolic missions. Paul had only to go forth into it.

Cesarea, also known as Cæsarea Palestinæ, where the "centurion of the band called the Italian band" professed his faith in Christ, was an important city, situated on the coast of the Mediterranean, about seventy miles from Jerusalem. It is several times alluded to in the Acts of the Apostles. In the time of Strabo it was merely a station for vessels, and was then known by the name of the Tower of Strabo. It was selected by Herod the Great as the site of a magnificent city, which occupied ten years in building, and was called by him, in honour of his patron, Augustus, Cesarea. Josephus says, "Herod built it all of white stone, adorned it with the most splendid palaces, and, what was the greatest and the most laborious work of all, with a harbour which was at all times free from the waves of the sea." (*Ant.* xv. 9, 6.) It was equal in size to the famous Piræus at Athens. After the death of Herod, when Judea became a part of the Roman Empire, Cesarea was the residence of the Roman procurators. Here Pontius Pilate, Felix, and Festus held their courts; and here, in consequence, the Roman troops had their head-quarters. (Acts xxv. 1.) Although the Jews were numerous, the population was, for the most part, Gentile, and Greek was the language spoken. Tacitus calls it the capital of Judea. (*Hist.* ii. 79.) It is several times mentioned in the history of the Crusades. Travellers describe it now as but a large heap of ruins; but the old name, Kaisariyeh, "still lingers to mark the spot where the proud metropolis of Roman Judea stood, and to teach a lesson of the vanity of earthly greatness. In the apostolic age Cesarea was at the climax of its splendour—the city of palaces, the seat of Roman government and law, and the rival of Jerusalem as the capital of Judea."

Founding of the Church at Antioch.

Soon after the conversion of Cornelius at Cesarea, if, indeed, the events were not simultaneous, they who

were scattered abroad "travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only." (Acts xi. 20.) From their position as Hellenists, and the semi-Gentile modes of thought of those among whom they laboured, it was unlikely that their efforts would ultimately be narrowed to their countrymen. The wants of the world were clamorous and imperious, and they possessed the "word of peace" which was adapted to appease its misery. Moreover, the idea was dawning upon believers that the gospel should be extended to the nations; and this revelation was made "in two different places, at Cesarea and Antioch, without any connection with each other—just as the Reformation arose almost concurrently and independently in Germany, Switzerland, and France."

The city of ANTIOCH is invested with immortal interest to all students of the New Testament as the cradle of Gentile, as Jerusalem was of Jewish, Christianity, and deserves more than a passing notice. It was at Antioch that the first Gentile church was constituted; and from this as his starting-point Paul went forth on his three great missionary journeys. (Acts xiii. 1; xv. 35—40; xviii. 22, 23.) According to Strabo, (xvi. 2, 7,) it was situated in an opening formed by the river Orontes, between the ranges of Mount Taurus and Mount Lebanon, about sixteen miles from the Mediterranean, with which it communicated by means of its port, Seleucia. The location was well chosen, both for commerce by sea and inland traffic. "It united," as Howson observes, "the internal advantages of Aleppo with the maritime opportunities of Smyrna." It was founded by Seleucus Nicator about 300 years before Christ, and received its name of Antioch in honour of his father Antiochus. "Being the capital of the Greek kings in Syria, it was a city not much inferior in magnitude to Paris, and its public buildings were both numerous and splendid. It had its theatre and its amphitheatre, its public baths, its forum, its circus, and its palace," and is said to have been composed of four cities joined in one; and hence it was called Tetrapolis. Its chief street, formed by Antiochus Epiphanes, was four miles in length, and adorned with colonnades on either side. The Jews composed no inconsiderable part of the population. They were made free citizens by Seleucus Nicator, who bestowed on them equal privileges with the Greeks and Macedonians. They were permitted to enjoy their own laws; and, as in Alexandria, they had their own governor, who was called the alabarch. Here the Jews were singularly successful in making proselytes among the Greeks. (Josephus, *Ant.* xii. 3, 1.) The prosperity of Antioch increased under the Romans. Pompey made it a free city, and it became the capital of the productive province of Syria. Strabo says, "Antioch is not much inferior in riches and magnitude to Seleucia on the Tigris, and Alexandria in Egypt;" (xvi. 2, 5;) and Josephus remarks, "Antioch is the metropolis of Syria, and without dispute deserves the place of the third city of the habitable earth under the Roman Empire, both in magnitude and also in other marks of prosperity." (*Wars*, iii. 2, 4.) The inhabitants, numbering nearly half a million, were Syrians, Greeks, Romans, and Jews; the Greek language, however, predominating as the medium of ordinary communication. Antioch is celebrated as the abode of profusion and luxury, and as excelling all other oriental cities in the gorgeousness of its palaces.

It was on this spot, where the softness of Asia but too effectually contended with the martial vigour of Europe, that the Spirit of God unfurled the banner of the Cross, destined, in the progress of its triumphs, to finally subdue both Orient and Occident to its sway. To Antioch, whether given in approval or reproach, we owe the new name CHRISTIANS, (Acts xi. 26,) conferred upon the disciples, which we shall meet again amidst the varied civilisation of Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome.

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY. A.D. 46, 47.

It will now be our object rapidly to sketch, in the light of recent historical research, the physical and moral features of those scenes through which the apostle of the Gentiles passed, leaving the reader to glean from the interesting narrative of Fleetwood the effect produced by Paul's conquests on the church at Jerusalem, and the steps which led to its complete emancipation from the bondage of Jewish prejudice.

Starting, then, from Antioch, where Barnabas and Paul were commanded by the Holy Ghost to be separated or consecrated "for the work whereunto he had called them," (Acts xiii. 2,) they depart for Seleucia, which was the port of Antioch, and about sixteen miles distant from it by land. The Orontes, in the time of the apostles, was navigable up to Antioch, (Strabo, xvi. 2, 7,) but its channel is now partially silted up. Some of the piers of the ancient harbour are still standing, being, in all probability, the same which stood when Paul embarked for Cyprus. The harbour itself is now choked up with sand and mud; but Conybeare and Howson say (*St. Paul*, vol. i. pp. 165—169) "the masonry is so good that a Turkish pasha entertained the design of clearing out and repairing it."

The destination of these "messengers of the churches" was not Seleucia, but the large and fertile island nearly opposite, known as Cyprus, about one hundred and thirty miles in length, and thirty in its greatest breadth. This insular territory "was celebrated in ancient times for its mines of copper, its precious stones, its wine, oil, and honey, and its beautiful and fragrant flowers." It was originally colonised by the Phœnicians, but became subject in turn to the Syrians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; and, in the time of the apostles, was a Roman province, governed by a proprætor, who was called a proconsul. From Salamis, on the east coast, they travelled to Paphos on the west, thus crossing the whole length of the island. In the latter place was the residence of the proconsul or "deputy, Sergius Paulus," (Acts xiii. 7,) who was under the influence of Barjesus, an apostate Jew and sorcerer. The "prudence," or intelligence, attributed by Luke to Paulus is not, as we might suppose, inconsistent with his admitting Elymas into his society. He appears to have been one of that numerous class of Gentiles who, dissatisfied with paganism, was seeking some better and purer religion. Elymas recommended himself to him as being a Jew, and he had to some extent yielded to his counsels; but, as is obvious, only partially, for his desire to hear Barnabas and Paul proved that he was not entirely subject to his power. No doubt, in withstanding the apostles, Barjesus was influenced by selfish motives; for, if Sergius Paulus became a convert to Christianity, the spell by which he held him was gone. The blindness with which Paul smote Elymas was the best answer to his assumed name, "the wise." Here the apostles were brought face to face with those "perversions of intellect" so conspicuous in the ancient world as men became "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." The first trophy won to the Lord in Cyprus by the preaching of the gospel proclaimed its majesty and omnipotence.

Several reasons might be assigned why Paul and Barnabas first directed their steps to Cyprus. 1. It was contiguous to Antioch, and there was frequent communication between the two places. 2. According to Merivale, there were numerous Jews in it; they formed, indeed, one-half of the population. 3. It was the birthplace of Barnabas, as we have before mentioned, and he was probably desirous of preaching the gospel in his native land. 4. Christianity had already obtained some hold in it, for men of Cyprus are mentioned among the number of those whose labours founded the church at Antioch. (Acts xi. 20.) Indeed, as has been remarked, "no place out of Palestine, with the exception of Antioch, has been so honourably associated with the work of successful evangelization."

From the tokens of Divine approbation which so signally marked the labours of Paul at Paphos, the first place in the enterprise is thenceforward transferred to him by St. Luke. In the evangelic narrative it is not commonly "Barnabas and Saul," (Acts xiii. 7,) but "Paul and Barnabas." (Acts xiii. 46.)

The reason which induced the apostles to advance to Perga, their next point of conquest, is supposed by some to have been that "Barnabas having persuaded Paul to begin at Cyprus, with which he was so well acquainted, Paul in turn pleaded for their trying now the regions lying westward of his own Cilicia, (Acts xxii. 3,) as he himself had already broken ground to the east of it." The movement, whatever its cause, was abundantly justified by the results that were subsequently achieved in the Pisidian Antioch. Perga was the capital of the small district of Pamphylia, situated on the river Cestrus, about seven miles due north from Attaleia. On the division of territory by Augustus after the battle of Actium, Pamphylia became an imperial province, governed by a proprætor. In the reign of Claudius, the time of which we are writing, it was united with Lycia and Pisidia; and afterwards we find it joined with Galatia. (Tacitus, *Hist.* ii. 9.) "There is," says Strabo, (xiv. 4, 2,) "the river Cestrus, up which, when one has sailed sixty furlongs, he comes to the city Perga, near which is the Temple of Diana, where every year there is a solemn convention." The city is now a ruin, and is known as Eski-Kalessi. In the time of the apostles the whole district was infested with robbers, and there can be little doubt that to this very journey Paul alludes, many years after, when he speaks, amidst his "journeyings often," of *perils of rivers* (as the word imports) and *perils of robbers.* (2 Cor. xi. 26.) If their departure from Paphos were taken in May—and before then the passes would have been blocked up with snow—Howson thinks it would account for Paul and Barnabas not staying at Perga, whose hot streets are then deserted; "men, women, and children, with their flocks and herds, all ascending, at the beginning of the hot season, from the plains to the cool, basin-like hollows on the mountains, moving in the same direction with our missionaries."

From Perga, John Mark, who had hitherto accompanied the apostles, returned to Jerusalem. (Acts xiii. 13.) A nephew of Barnabas, he was either jealous of the prominence given to Paul over his own relative, or, intimidated by the dangers which were confronting them in their mission, he resolved to abandon the undertaking. His conduct was reprehensible in a high degree, and hence, at a later period, Paul would not accept him as a companion in his second missionary tour, (Acts xv. 37, 38,) though later still he extended to him his fullest confidence. (2 Tim. iv. 11.)

"Through rugged mountain-passes, and over large and flooded rivers which rendered their progress dangerous, these intrepid soldiers of the Cross pursued their way," and ere long entered Antioch in Pisidia, where, in consequence of the opposition of the Jews, a breach was first made with the worshippers of the synagogue. (Acts xiii. 46.) Pisidia was a hilly district, lying to the north of Pamphylia, stretching along the range of Mount Taurus. It appears never to have been a separate country, and was at this period united to Pamphylia. Antioch, its chief town, is called by Pliny Antioch of Pisidia; by Strabo, Antioch of Phrygia; and by Ptolemy, Antioch of Pamphylia. It was one of the numerous cities built by Seleucus Nicator about 300 B.C., and under Augustus was elevated to the dignity of a Roman colony. Strabo (xii. 8, 14) says, "In the district of Phrygia, called Paroreia, there is a mountainous ridge stretching from east to west. On each side there is a large plain, and two cities in the neighbourhood. Philomelium lies on the north side of the ridge, and Antioch, called Antioch near Pisidia, on the south; the former standing on a plain, and the latter on a hill." Arundell, in his "Discoveries in Asia Minor," has identified this situation with the modern town of Yalobatch; and an inscription has been found by Hamilton containing the words "Antiocheæ Cæsare," the remainder being entirely obliterated.

To the Jewish synagogue in this city, following the order observed by God himself in the gift of his revelations, Paul and Barnabas address their overtures of salvation and life. The synagogue here seems to have been considerably attended by the Gentile population; at least, so we may gather from the character of the congregation which on this occasion listened to the preaching of Paul. His appeal is similar to that of Peter at Pentecost: "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up

Jesus." (Acts xiii. 32, 33.) In that assembly Judaism stands face to face with paganism; nor is it long doubtful in what quarter the Christian church is to find her readiest accessions. "The two great religious sections of mankind were summoned that day to take their position in relation to Christianity: it is a critical moment in the history of the apostolic age." There was a supreme opportunity offered the Hebrews to vindicate themselves from the crushing charge which had rested on their nation ever since the crucifixion of our Lord. Would they embrace it or cast it from them? At the moment when the Gentiles are thirsting for the word of life, and pressing into the kingdom, they display once more the obstinate impenitence of their race. "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." They appear bent on filling up the measure of their iniquity. With sorrow for their darkness and crime, but with faithfulness to the Christ-like embassy on which they had come forth, Paul and Barnabas declare, "Lo, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES;" and as they depart "they shake off the dust of their feet, and this symbolical act is a fresh proof that the severance between the church and the synagogue is complete."

Travelling across bare and rugged uplands nearly a hundred miles eastward, they reach ICONIUM, on the high-road between Ephesus and the Syrian Antioch, the original starting-point of their journey. On account of the many variations in the division of the provinces of Asia Minor, Iconium has been assigned by different writers to different countries: it belonged to Phrygia according to Xenophon, to Lycaonia according to Cicero and the elder Pliny. In the time of the apostles it was the capital of a small tetrarchy, subject to Rome; at a later period of the Empire it was made a colony. In after ages it became celebrated as the metropolis of the Seljukian sultans. At present it is a considerable town, retaining its ancient name of Konieh, and possessing a population of about thirty thousand. It is the capital of the Turkish province of Caramania. The city is four miles in circumference, but much of it is waste land, and, according to Hamilton, it is a scene of destruction and decay, with heaps of ruins and dilapidated mosques. (*Asia Minor*, vol ii. pp. 198—210.)

Here a similar reception was accorded them as in Pisidia: some believed, and some believed not. "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord. . . . . But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles." (Acts xiv. 3, 4.) At length an assault was made "to use them despitefully, and to stone them;" but, being apprised of it, they fled into Lycaonia. There is no reason to believe that the hatred of the Jews at Iconium succeeded in its object. Paley observes, "Had this assault at Iconium been completed; had the history related that a stone was thrown, as it relates that preparations were made to stone Paul and his companions; or even had the account of this transaction stopped without going on to inform us that Paul and his companions 'were aware of their danger, and fled,' a contradiction between the history and the epistle (2 Cor. xi. 25) would have ensued. Truth is necessarily consistent; but it is scarcely possible that independent accounts, not having truth to guide them, should thus advance to the very brink of contradiction without falling into it."—*Horæ Paulinæ*, on 2 Cor. xi. 24, 25.

The sites of LYSTRA and DERBE have not yet been discovered, but it is probable that the former was situated about thirty miles south of Iconium, near to a singular mountain called Kara Dagh, or the Black Mountain. Formerly the village of Lutik was supposed to be the ancient Lystra, but it is now generally agreed that Hamilton's view is the more accurate, which identifies it with ruins at the foot of Kara Dagh.

Derbe could not have been far from Lystra. Its situation is doubtful, but it must have been somewhere in the south-eastern extremity of the great Lycaonian plain. (Strabo, xii. 6, 3.)

"At Lystra the apostles appear for the first time in the centre, as it were, of a pagan population; and it is remarkable that in this wild and inland region we find the old heathen religion maintaining a lively and commanding influence over the popular mind. In the more civilised and commercial parts of the Roman world, such extraordinary cures as that of the

cripple at Lystra (Acts xiv. 8) might have been publicly wrought, and might have excited a wondering interest in the multitude; but it may be doubted whether the lowest or most ignorant would have had so much faith in the old fabulous appearances of their own deities, as immediately to have imagined their actual and visible appearance in the persons of these surprising strangers. It is only in the remote and savage Lystra, where the Greek language had not predominated over the primitive barbarous dialect (probably a branch of the Cappadocian), that the popular emotion instantly metamorphoses these public benefactors into the Jove and Mercury of their own temples."—*Milman's History of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 10.

The stoning which was threatened at Iconium was brought to pass at Lystra; Paul was dragged out of the city for dead, and his subsequent recovery was nothing short of a miracle. In this journey he tasted both the sweets and the hazards of a missionary career. But none of these things moved him; his heart was fixed on Christ for the world, and the world for Christ.

Paul and Barnabas, in this circuit of travel, preached the gospel in the island of Cyprus, and visited the three Asiatic districts of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia. In addition to the conversion of individuals, they founded at least four Christian churches in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe; and though the ground traversed was small compared with the countries visited by Paul in his second and third journeys, the message was shown to be world-wide in its scope and adaptations, and there was promise held forth that Christ "shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY. A.D. 51—53.

Accompanied by Silas, or Silvanus (Acts xv. 40)—the partiality of Barnabas for his relative Mark having separated him from his distinguished fellow-labourer—Paul a second time departed from Antioch on a wider area of travel, "being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." Though there was a sharp contention between our apostle and his former friend and coadjutor, Howson thinks it likely that they made a deliberate and amicable arrangement to divide the region of their first mission between them, Paul taking the *continental*, and Barnabas the *insular* portion of the proposed visitation. (Acts xv. 36.) If Barnabas passed through Salamis and Paphos, and Paul, journeying westward, after going through Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium, proceeded as far as Antioch in Pisidia, the whole circuit of the proposed visitation was actually accomplished; for it does not appear that any converts had been made at Perga and Attaleia. At Derbe or Lystra, most probably the latter, the deputation was joined by Timotheus, (Acts xvi. 1,) who, it is likely, had been brought to Christ on the former journey. That Paul "took and circumcised him" preparatory to his going forth is not to be looked upon as a slavish concession to Judaism; it was designed merely to put him into a position in which he might be able to gain the Jews. What period was occupied in "confirming the churches" already existing in Syria and Cilicia we know not, as Luke only informs us that "they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem."

We possess but a brief record of Paul's progress through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia; it is not even certain what route he chose, or the particular cities he visited. In Acts Phrygia is to be understood rather "in an ethnological than a political sense," as at this time there was, strictly speaking, no country so called. The name designated a district which Strabo (xii. 8, 1) describes as Phrygia Major, situated to the north of the range of Taurus. It cannot be exactly defined. In the south it was separated from Pisidia by the Taurian Mountains; on the west it was bounded by Caria and the other portions of proconsular Asia; on the north by Bithynia; and on the east by Galatia. Its principal cities which are mentioned in the New Testament are Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, which

form the southern part of the district. In the time of the Maccabees, according to Josephus, there were many Jews settled in Phrygia. (*Ant.* xii. 3, 4.) It has been suggested that the apostle on this occasion preached the gospel in Colosse and Laodicea, but these cities lay far from his route, and it is very doubtful if he ever visited them at all. (Col. ii. 1.)

A considerable time must have been spent in GALATIA, though Luke merely mentions it in passing, for it was during this journey that the churches in that district were founded. In the Epistle to the Galatians (iv. 13, 14) the apostle speaks of having preached to them the gospel at the first "through infirmity of the flesh," though he was received and welcomed by them "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." Gallo-Græcia, as it is called, was at this period a Roman province, bounded on the north by Bithynia, on the east by Pontus and Cappadocia, on the south by Pamphylia, and on the west by proconsular Asia. The Galatians were the descendants of Gauls who invaded Greece and Asia about 280 B.C., and after a variety of fortunes settled down in that part of Asia. Cneius Manlius, according to Livy, reduced them to a nominal dependence on the Romans 189 B.C., but they were ruled by their own princes, called at first tetrarchs, and subsequently kings. Their last monarch, Amyntas, for deserting Antony, was rewarded by Augustus with a large extension of territory. The original language of the Galatians was Celtic, but they soon learned Greek, and were in consequence called Gallo-Græcians.

It seems to have been Paul's first intention to preach the word in ASIA—"not the rich peninsula called Asia Minor, but only that section of its western coast which constituted the Roman province of Asia," the usual meaning of the name in Acts—but he was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost." (Acts xvi. 6.) If he had carried out his purpose, he must have proceeded southward. The door thus closed against him, he advanced in a north-westerly direction. No stay was made in MYSIA, which Strabo (xii. 4, 5.) describes as lying along the shores of the Hellespont, nor in BITHYNIA, where again the apostle would fain have laboured, but the Spirit suffered him not. (Acts xvi. 7.) Bithynia was a Roman province adjoining proconsular Asia, and situated along the south-western shores of the Black Sea. (Strabo, xii. 4, 1.) In the reign of Augustus Bithynia and Pontus constituted one province, but under Nero Pontus was raised into a separate district. Pliny was governor of Bithynia when he wrote his remarkable letter to the Emperor Trajan concerning the purity and constancy of the early Christians. At that time, as he testifies, many of every rank and of all ages had embraced the gospel, and the pagan temples were well-nigh forsaken. (Pliny, x. 96, 97.)

These successive prohibitions to preach longer in the east determined Paul to come down to Troas, (Acts xvi. 8,) as "he felt that some entirely new field was about to be opened for him, and by seeking the nearest port from which he might take shipping, he would be in readiness to go whenever he might be ordered." TROAS—or, according to its full name, Alexandria Troas—was a seaport on the Hellespont, between Lectum and Sigeum, about four miles distant from the site of ancient Troy. It was built by Antigonus, one of the successors of Alexander, and called by him Antigoneia Troas; but this name was afterwards changed by Lysimachus into Alexandria Troas, in honour of Alexander the Great. (Strabo, xiii. 1, 26.) It was a frequent point of embarkation to Greece from proconsular Asia. (Acts xx. 5.) Such was the importance attached to this spot by the Romans that, according to Suetonius, Julius Cæsar once contemplated transferring to it the capital of the Empire; and Constantine, before he ultimately fixed on the site of Constantinople, commenced to build at Alexandria Troas. (Gibbon, ch. xvii.) The name which it still bears among the Turks is Eski-Stamboul, or Old Constantinople. Fellowes, describing the city now a ruin, says, "Within the walls are strewn carvings, mouldings, and pedestals in marble, some of which have inscriptions generally in the Greek language. The harbour can still be traced, though it is shut out from the sea by a narrow strip of land."—*Asia Minor*, pp. 59—75.

It was here, on the extreme western boundary of Asia, with the Ægean Sea rolling before him, that a Divine vision summoned the apostle to carry the tidings of salvation to Europe: "In the night there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." (Acts xvi. 9.)

The culture and artistic splendour of Greece and the majesty of Rome had failed to subdue the curse which pressed on human nature, and all pagandom, in the person of this visional representative, lifted its voice to implore healing and relief. As Lange finely remarks, "The Macedonian spirit once, as a proud conqueror, crossed the Hellespont and filled Asia with his glory; but now he stands as a suppliant before a man who has no other weapon than the sword of the Spirit." Macedonia, so famous in history, was the kingdom of Philip and Alexander, under whom it attained the climax of its glory. The last of its kings, Perseus, was defeated by Paulus Æmilius, 167 B.C., when it became a Roman province, and was divided into four parts, each district having a capital of its own. (Livy, xlv. 29.)

Joined at Troas by Luke—the narrative in Acts from this point assuming the first person instead of the third (Acts xvi. 10)—the missionaries embarked for their destination, and, passing Samothracia, reached Neapolis in two days. Landing here, they travelled across a high ridge of land to PHILIPPI, the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony. The original name of Philippi, according to Strabo, was Crenides: afterwards it was known by the name of Datum. (*Fragm.* 41, 43.) It was subdued by Philip, who rebuilt and fortified it, calling it Philippi after himself. It is celebrated in history as the battle-field where the death-blow of the Roman Republic was struck, and Brutus and Cassius were utterly routed by the forces of Augustus and Antony. To us it has an imperishable interest as the city where Paul first preached the gospel in Europe, and gathered wider trophies to adorn the triumph of Christ. Its site is now occupied by a trifling village named Filiba.

It is apparent, from the Epistle to the Philippians, that the effect of Paul's message in this colony is not to be measured by the individual cases of conversion recorded by Luke—Lydia, the gaoler, and the "damsel possessed with a spirit of divination:" these are given as specimens of far more extensive conquests. The mass of the Gentile population in Philippi was groaning and travailing together for liberty and salvation. This was the first place, however, where the apostle had to confront persecution backed with all the severity of Roman law. Formerly, at Lystra and Iconium, it was either the Jews who exhibited hostility, or the multitude who resorted to violence were stirred up and directed by them; but in this case the charge brought against Paul and Silas was that they taught customs which were "not lawful" for the people to receive. (Acts xvi. 21.) "It forms a prelude to those frequent persecutions to which, during the first three centuries, the Roman government subjected the Christians."

Besought by the magistrates to depart from Philippi, the apostle and his companions resumed their journey, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, places of no importance, to THESSALONICA, situated on the slope at the northern end of the Thermaic gulf, now called the Gulf of Salonika. This city, originally named Therma, was rebuilt and fortified by Cassander, the son of Antipater, who called it after his wife, the sister of Alexander the Great, Thessalonica. (Strabo, vii. *Fragm.* 24.) When the province of Macedonia was formed under the Romans, it became the metropolis and residence of the proconsul. Strabo, in the first century, describes it as the largest city of Macedonia; (vii. 7, 4;) at present it is regarded as the second city of European Turkey, and contains a population of seventy thousand. Its modern name is Saloniki.

Here there was a synagogue of the Jews, probably the only one in the district. At Philippi there was only a *prosencha;* and here, accordingly, for three Sabbath-days Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, "opening and alleging" that Jesus is Christ. (Acts xvii. 3.) Many were won by his preaching, and Howson says, "We see how appropriate a place it was for one of the starting-points of the gospel in Europe, and can appreciate the force of what Paul said to the Thessalonians within a few months of his departure from them: 'From you, the word of the Lord sounded forth like a trumpet, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place.'" (1 Thess. i. 8.) But once more persecution assailed him. He was accused of contravening "the decrees of Cæsar," (Acts xvii. 7,) and again he was compelled to seek safety in flight.

BEREA, the next place visited, is little noticed by ancient writers. It was situated in Macedonia Tertia, according to the division made by Paulus Æmilius,

(Livy, xlv. 30,) and was about sixty miles from Thessalonica. Its real name was Pheræa, but pronounced by the Macedonians Berea. It is now known as Verria or Kara-Verria, and contains a population of twenty thousand. The Jews of this city were more favourably disposed than those of Thessalonica; but the latter pursued Paul thither, and "stirred up the people," (Acts xvii. 13,) so that Silas and Timothy, being left with them for awhile, the brethren sent him by sea to ATHENS.

This celebrated city, which has been called "the university of the world," was situated about five miles from the Ægean Sea, with which it was connected by its port, Piræus. "Four small hills rose within its walls. The highest was the Acropolis, or the citadel, a rock about one hundred and fifty feet high. On it were the most famous temples, statues, arches, and monuments; and towering above all stood the colossal statue of Minerva Polias, the defender of the city. At a little distance from the Acropolis were three smaller hills: the Areopagus, memorable to Christians as the spot where Paul delivered his address; the Pnyx, on which the assemblies of the people were held; and the Museum." In the days of Paul, Athens belonged to the province of Achaia, and was, like Thessalonica, a free city of the Empire, governed by its own laws. It is now the capital of modern Greece, but its chief attractions to visitors of the present day are the remarkable ruins which attest its ancient greatness and splendour.

In this city the apostle encountered paganism in its stronghold, though here it disclosed its abject and melancholy effeteness. The altar to "the Unknown God" was a crowning demonstration that philosophy, professing to be wise, found "no end in wandering mazes lost." Epicurean and Stoic were there, but how poor the fruits of their earnestness and inquiry! The ambassador for Christ unfolded his message in a form adapted to Athenian modes of thought, but its final word was Christ the Saviour, the Judge of men; (Acts xvii. 31;) and we read of no church founded there by his labours. "The wise and prudent" stumble at the truth which is revealed unto babes. No storm of malice was excited against Paul, but he had to lament that he preached "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 23.)

In advancing from Athens to CORINTH the apostle was brought into contact with a very different state of civilisation. This city was situated on the isthmus which connects the Peloponnesus with the rest of Greece, and divides the Ægean from the Ionian Sea. In a military point of view it commanded the entrance into the peninsula, so that it was called by Xenophon "the gate of the Peloponnesus." It was also most favourably situated for the commerce both of the East and West. In the time of Paul it was celebrated for its wealth and magnificence. Cicero calls it "the light of all Greece." It was painfully distinguished by its profligacy and licentiousness, so that "to live like a Corinthian" was to be steeped in infamy. Dio Chrysostom designates it as a city "the most licentious of all that are or have been."

For eighteen months (Acts xviii. 11) the apostle continued at Corinth "teaching the word of God," and finally separated from the synagogue, being joined by Crispus, its chief ruler, who, with his household, professed the faith of Christ; and when trouble arose, and the Jews "opposed themselves, and blasphemed," Gallio, a brother of Seneca the philosopher, shielded Paul from the unreasoning passion of his countrymen.

From Corinth, accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, the apostle sailed to Syria; made a short stay at Ephesus, and left them there; then visited Jerusalem, and returned to Antioch. In this second missionary journey, besides confirming the churches of Cilicia and Pisidia, he planted new churches in Phrygia and Galatia, and, crossing over to Europe, established Christianity in the four cities, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth.

PAUL'S THIRD AND LAST MISSIONARY JOURNEY. A.D. 54—58.

The third journey, starting once more from Antioch, led Paul again through the regions of Asia, Phrygia, and Galatia. But now, instead of passing over into Macedonia, he took his way along the west of Asia Minor, to the famous city of Ephesus. Ephesus was situated between Smyrna and Miletus, on the Caystrus, not far from its mouth, and was built partly on Mount Prion, partly on Mount Coressus, and partly in the valley which separates these hills. Strabo (xiv. 1, 20) mentions its commodious harbour, called Panormus, formed by the river, which here widened out into a spacious basin. The city lay on the main route of traffic between the East and West, and hence became the resort of all nations. Built originally by Androclus the Athenian, it gradually rose, under the Macedonian and Roman governments, to be one of the chief cities of the East. It was reputed to be the metropolis of no less than five hundred cities. Its celebrity was increased by the magnificent Temple of Diana, reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world. Nothing remains of it to-day but a miserable village called Asalook; and its celebrated harbour has become an unhealthy marsh. "The ruins of the city are extensive and interesting; the theatre may yet be traced; but of the temple not one stone remains above another."

Here the apostle remained, speaking boldly in the synagogue, "for the space of three months;" but when "divers were hardened, and believed not," (Acts xix. 9,) he separated the disciples, and disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus, probably a teacher of philosophy or rhetoric, who had become a convert to Christianity. The interest of Paul's third and concluding missionary journey gathers chiefly around his two years' residence at Ephesus. (Acts xix. 10.) We are told that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." It was probably during this period that the foundations of the seven churches of Asia were laid. Renan observes, "The whole western part of Asia Minor, especially the basins of the Meander and Hermus, were about this time covered with churches, and without doubt Paul was in a more or less direct manner their founder. Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and perhaps Tralles, thus received the germs of the faith."—*Saint Paul*, p. 351.

We can estimate the strength of Christianity in this city by the opposition it evoked. After the defeat of the sons of Sceva by an evil spirit whom they attempted to exorcise, we are told that "multitudes came forward and voluntarily gave up to be burned not only all their store of amulets, but even the books which contained their magical formularies. Their value, as probably they were rated at a high price, amounted to 50,000 pieces of silver, most likely Attic drachms or Roman silver denarii, a coin very current in Asia Minor. The sum would thus make something more than £1,600." This would account for the fear of Demetrius and the craftsmen who made silver shrines for Diana, which brought them no small gain, that the temple of their goddess would be despised, and her magnificence destroyed. It was a death-grapple between faiths and interests, and it would not be long dubious which would prove victorious.

The entire period of Paul's abode at Ephesus was three years, during which, however, he paid a short visit to Corinth. (2 Cor. xiii. 1.) On finally quitting the city he went to Troas, and thence proceeded to Philippi. Here he wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and then proceeded to Corinth, where he continued three months. (Acts xx. 3.) Leaving Europe once more, he directed his course toward Syria, with a presentiment, confirmed by numerous prophecies, that his work was almost done. His voyage was full of interest, and he hastened to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost, A.D. 58. The burden which weighed upon his spirit is described in his address to the elders of the church of Ephesus, who met him at Miletus: "Behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts xx. 25, 24.)

The vessel sailed onward to Cesarea, passing Coos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, and Ptolemais, troops of dis-

ciples coming, at every point of stoppage, to bid the Christian warrior farewell, and forcibly reminding us of Luther's journey to Worms, when, according to historians, all along the route devout men appealed to him from housetop and tower, "Confess Christ, deny him not." The apostle was going to imprisonment and bonds. But "a Paul less in the world is the gospel confined for ages to the shores of Asia, and far remote from our Europe, the centre of whose conversion, and thus of the civilisation of the globe, Paul has become next to Jesus Christ himself." And his devotion and endurance surely urge us to proclaim with renewed fervour and energy that gospel, shown to be mighty through God at Corinth and Ephesus, till earth's far-off tribes shall catch the strain, and roll it back in ever-deepening echoes—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

AN INDEX

TO THE

GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Every name mentioned in the New Testament will be found upon the two Maps appended to this Volume, the Map of Palestine being referred to by the Roman numeral I., *that illustrating the Acts of the Apostles by* II.

Herod the Great was nominated king of the Jews about 40 B.C., and governed the whole of Palestine, which at that time included the following districts:—

1. *Galilee.*
2. *Samaria.*
3. *Judea.*

These three on the western side of the Jordan.

4. *Northern Perea*, including Trachonitis, Batanea, Auranitis, Gaulanitis, and Iturea.

5. *Southern Perea*, including Perea proper, or Galaaditis, Ammonitis, and Moabitis.

6. *Decapolis*, or the confederation of the ten cities.

When Herod the Great died, two years after the birth of Christ, his kingdom was distributed amongst his three sons:—

1. *Herod Archelaus* was nominated king or ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea.

2. *Herod Antipas* was appointed tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.

3. *Philip* became tetrarch of Batanea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, and Auranitis.

Archelaus was deposed in 11 A.C., and exiled to Gaul, and the territories held by him were annexed to the province of Syria, and governed by Roman procurators, amongst whom were Pontius Pilate, Felix, and Porcius Festus.

Philip also died in exile, and his tetrarchy was assigned to *Agrippa I.*, grandson of Herod the Great, who subsequently also received the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, as well as Judea and Samaria, together with the title of King of Judea. It was he who built the third wall of Jerusalem.

Abilene, the country governed by the tetrarch Lysanias, the capital of which was Abila, to the north-west of Damascus; now Suk Barada. (Lat. 33° 39′ N., Long. 36° 5′ E.) I.

Aceldama, "the field of blood," a potter's field outside Jerusalem, purchased by Judas Iscariot, and subsequently converted into a burial-place for strangers, and used as such until the last century. I.

Achaia, a Roman province, which included Hellas and the Peloponnese, or the modern kingdom of Greece. II.

Adramyttium, a seaport in Mysia, now called Edremid. (Lat. 39° 33′ N., Long. 27° E.) II.

Adria, the modern Ionian and Adriatic Seas. II.

Ænon, "near to Salim," 8 Roman miles south of Scythopolis, now Tell Kaun. (Lat. 32° 25′ N., Long. 35° 28′ E.) I.

Alexandria, a city of Egypt, built by Alexander the Great, and still one of the most flourishing seaports on the Mediterranean. (Lat. 31° 10′ N., Long. 29° 55′ E.) II.

Amphipolis, a city of Macedonia, at the mouth of the Strymon; modern Struma. (Lat. 40° 45′ N., Long. 23° 50′ E.) II.

Antioch, a town in Pisidia, a province of Asia Minor, now a heap of ruins, near Yalobatch. (Lat. 38° 20′ N., Long. 30° 50′ E.) II.

Antioch, formerly the capital of Syria, where the disciples first received the name of Christians. It is still a flourishing city, known as Antakia. (Lat. 36° 12′ N., Long. 36° 10′ E.) II.

Antipatris, a city in the plain to the east of Joppa, now Raspael Ain. (Lat. 32° 6′ N., Long. 34° 55′ E.) Was called Capharsaba formerly, and renamed by Herod, who rebuilt it. I.

Apollonia, a city of Macedonia. (Lat. 40° 40′ N., Long. 23° 33′ E.) II.

Appii Forum, a town in Italy, 43 Roman miles to the south of

Rome, on the Via Appia, which was built 313 years B.C., and connected Rome with Capua and Brundusium. II.

Arabia, an extensive country to the east and south of Palestine. II.

Arimathea, now a ruin to the north of the village Ramin. (Lat. 31° 58′ N., Long. 35° 3′ E.) I.

Asia, of the New Testament, is identical with our Asia Minor, the western peninsula of Asia, and particularly with the Roman proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. II.

Assos, a seaport town of Mysia. (Lat. 39° 30′ N., Long. 26° 15′ E. II.

Athens, the capital of Attica; the inhabitants were famed for their culture. (Lat. 38° N., Long. 23° 43′ E.) II.

Attaleia, a seaport of Pamphylia, the modern Adalia. (Lat. 36° 55′ N., Long. 30° 45′ E.) II.

Azotus, formerly called Ashdod, one of the royal cities of the Philistines, now Esdud. (Lat. 31° 45′ N., Long. 34° 40′ E.) I.

Babylon, on the Euphrates, the ancient capital of Babylonia, which became a Persian province 538 B.C., now a deserted heap of ruins. (Lat. 32° 30′ N., Long. 44° 25′ E.)

Berea, a town in Macedonia, between Thessalonica and Hadrianopolis (Acts xvii. 1); the modern Verria. (Lat. 40° 30′ N., Long. 22° 10′ E.) II.

Bethany, *i.e.* "house of dates," a village near Jerusalem, where Lazarus and his two sisters lived; now El Azirieh. (Lat. 31° 46′ N., Long. 35° 15′ E.) I.

Bethesda, *i.e.* "the house of mercy," a pool near the Sheep-market, in Jerusalem. I.

Bethlehem, *i.e.* "house of bread," a city of Judea, the birthplace of David and of Jesus Christ; now Bet Lahem, a poor Christian village. (Lat. 31° 42′ N., Long. 35° 12′ E.) I.

Bethphage, *i.e.* "house of figs," a village near Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives. I.

Bethsaida of Galilee, the birthplace of several of the disciples, a fishing village on the Sea of Genesareth, has been identified with Et Tabiyah. (Lat. 32° 53′ N., Long. 35° 33′ E.) Referred to in Matt. xi. 21—24, Luke x. 13—15, John i. 44. I.

Bethsaida in Gaulonitis is the Bethsaida referred to in Luke ix. 10, Mark viii. 22. It was rebuilt by the tetrarch Philip, and named **Bethsaida Julias,** in honour of a daughter of Augustus. Now a heap of ruins, Et Tell, north of the Lake of Genesareth. (Lat. 32° 55′ N., Long. 35° 38′ E.) I.

Bithynia, a province of Asia Minor. II.

Calvary, called Golgotha in Hebrew, which signifies "a place resembling a skull." It was a place outside the walls of Jerusalem, where malefactors used to be executed. I.

Cana in Galilee, now Kana el Jelil. (Lat. 32° 49′ N., Long. 35° 18′ E.) I.

Canaan, the country to the west of the Jordan.

Capernaum, a city on the Lake of Galilee, identified by Robinson with Khan Minieh, by others with Tell Hum. (Lat. 32° 53′ N., Long. 35° 30′ E.) I.

Cappadocia, a province of Asia Minor. II.

Cedron, *i.e.* "dark or turgid brook," in the valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives; now Wady Kidron. I.

Cenchrea, the harbour of Corinth, the modern Kekhrias. (Lat. 37° 52′ N., Long. 22° 55′ E.) II.

Cesarea (Cæsarea), or C. Palæstinæ, or C. Maritima, residence of the Roman procurators, and strongly garrisoned, built by Herod I. on the site of an old castle, called Straton's Tower; now ruins of Kaisariyeh. (Lat. 32° 30′ N., Long. 34° 59′ E.) After the destruction of Jerusalem it remained the capital of Palestine for nearly four centuries. It was destroyed by the Saracens, and never rebuilt. I.

Cesarea (Cæsarea) **Philippi,** anciently Baal Gad, or Baal Hermon, then Panium or Paneas, from a grotto of Pan. Also referred to as Neronias and Cæsarea Paneas. It was enlarged by Philip the tetrarch. Now called Banias. (Lat. 33° 15′ N., Long. 35° 42′ E.) I.

Chaldeans, the inhabitants of **Chaldea,** that portion of Babylonia to the west of the Euphrates, and occasionally the whole of Babylonia. Astrologers and magicians are sometimes referred to as Chaldeans.

Chanaan, the same as Canaan.

Charran, or **Haran,** a city of Mesopotamia; now Kharran. (Lat. 36° 52′ N., Long. 39° E.) II.

Chios, an island of the Grecian Archipelago, between Samos and Lesbos. II.

Chorazin, a city near Capernaum and Bethsaida; now ruins of Bir Kerazeh. (Lat. 32° 50′ N., Long. 35° 34′ E.) I.

Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor, the capital of which was Tarsus. II.

Clauda, a small island to the south of Crete, or Candia; now Gaudo. (Lat. 34° 50′ N., Long. 24° E.) II.

Cnidus, a cape or peninsula of Caria, in Asia Minor, between Coos and Rhodes; now Krio. (Lat. 36° 40′ N., Long. 27° 20′ E.) II.

Colosse, a city in Phrygia, on the Lycus; now Gerduk. (Lat. 37° 50′ N., Long. 29° 20′ E.) II.

Coos, an island in the Ægean Sea, opposite Cnidus; now Ko. (Lat. 36° 50′ N., Long. 27° E.) II.

Corinth, a commercial town near the Isthmus of Corinth, now ruins, to the south-west of modern Corinth. (Lat. 37° 55′ N., Long. 22° 50′ E.) Cenchrea and Lecheon were the two seaports of the ancient city. II.

Crete, a large island, now generally known as Candia. (Lat. 35° 30′ N., Long. 25° E.) II.

Cyprus, an island in the eastern Mediterranean, still known by that name. (Lat. 35° N., Long. 33° E.) II.

Cyrene, a town of the Cyrenaica (the modern Barka), a province on the north coast of Africa (Libya), anciently renowned for its fertility. The Cyrenean Jews had a synagogue of their own at Jerusalem, now ruins near Krenna, a poor village. (Lat. 32° 45′ N., Long. 21° 35′ E.) II.

Dalmanutha (Mark viii. 10), the same as the "coasts of Magdala" (Matt. xv. 39), a district on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, in which was Magdala, which see.

Dalmatia, a maritime district on the Adriatic, then a portion of the Roman province of Illyria. II.

Damascus, the capital of Syria, now Dimeshk e Sham. (Lat. 33° 32′ N., Long. 36° 17′ E.) I.

Decapolis, *i.e.* "the ten cities," a confederation of cities in the enjoyment of certain privileges during the dominion of the Romans. The following are known to have belonged to it: Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Gamala, Dium, Capitolias, Pella, Gerasa, and Philadelphia. Their number appears to have varied at different epochs, in consequence of certain cities losing their privileges, whilst they were conferred upon others.

Derbe, a city in Lycaonia, near Lystra. (Lat. 37° 30′ N., Long. 33° 40′ E.) II.

Egypt, the country on the Lower Nile. II.

Elamites, the inhabitants of Elam (Elymais), a province of Persia.

Emmaus. There existed several places of this name, the meaning of which appears to be "hot baths" (Hamath). The Emmaus

referred to in Luke xxiv. 13 is identical, probably, with Kulonieh, 3½ miles to the west of Jerusalem. Nicopolis, the modern Amwas, was likewise known as Emmaus, and so was Hammath, on the Sea of Galilee, now Hamam. I.

Ephesus, capital of Asia proconsularis, in Ionia, with a celebrated Temple of Diana, now ruins, near a poor village, Asalook. (Lat. 38° N., Long. 27° 20′ E.) II.

Ephraim, near the Wilderness (John xi. 54), is identical with Ophrah, a city of Benjamin, which has been identified with the modern village at Taiyibeh. (Lat. 31° 57′ N., Long. 35° 18′ E.) I.

Ethiopia, a term originally applied to all countries inhabited by black or dark-complexioned races. Subsequently restricted to the regions of the Upper Nile.

Fair Havens, a harbour on the south coast of Crete, not far from Lasea. (Lat. 35° N., Long. 25° 35′ E.) II.

Gadara, a fortress to the east of the Jordan, now Um Keis. (Lat. 32° 40′ N., Long. 35° 42′ E.) The country of which Gadara was the capital, and which extended to the Sea of Galilee, is referred to as the "country of the Gadarenes" by Mark (v. 1) and Luke (viii. 26). It is identical with the "country of the Gergesenes" of Matthew (viii. 28), the latter having named it from a city Gergesa, on the shore of the lake itself, where the ruins of Girsa are found now. I.

Galatia, a province of Asia Minor, the capital of which was Ancyra. It was inhabited by various Gallic tribes, and a German one, and Hieronymus says that they spoke a German dialect, like that spoken near Treves. II.

Galilee, in the time of Jesus Christ, included all northern Palestine to the west of the Jordan. Its northern portion was called "Galilee of the Gentiles," because many of its inhabitants were Gentiles. I.

Galilee, Sea of, See Genesareth.

Gaza, a southern frontier city of Palestine, in the country of the Philistines, now Ghazze. (Lat. 31° 30′ N., Long. 33° 58′ E.) I.

Genesareth, a fertile plain to the west of the lake bearing the same name, the probable signification of the name being "gardens of princes." (Lat. 32° 5′ N., Long. 35° 32′ E.) I.

Genesareth, Sea or Lake of, also called Sea of Tiberias, from a town on its shore; the Sea of Chinnereth of the Old Testament, now the Bahr Tabaric, a lake 13 miles long and 7 miles wide, through which flows the Jordan. It is 626 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. Its centre is in Lat. 32° 47′ N., Long. 35° 35′ E. I.

Gethsemane, a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives, outside Jerusalem. I.

Golgotha. See Calvary.

Greece, one of the most celebrated countries of antiquity. In the time of the apostles it was a Roman province. II.

Hierapolis, a city in Phrygia, on the Meander. (Lat. 38° N., Long. 29° 10′ E.) II.

Iconium, a city of Isauria, in Asia Minor; now Konieh. (Lat. 37° 50′ N., Long. 32° 30′ E.) II.

Idumea, the country of the Edomites, to the south of Judea, large portions of which were assigned to it. The boundary between the two can no longer be determined, and that on our map is merely a rough approximation. I.

Illyricum, a Roman province, including the countries to the east of the Adriatic (modern Bosnia, Dalmatia, Albania). II.

Israel, Land of, *i.e.* the land assigned to Israel, viz. Palestine.

Italy, the peninsula bearing now the same name, the capital of which is Rome.

Iturea, a province in the tetrarchy of Philip, now the district of Jetur, to the south-east of Mount Hauran. (Lat. 32° 40′ N., Long. 36° 45′ E.) I.

Jacob's Well, near Sychar, which see.

Jericho, *i.e.* "city of palm-trees," in the valley of the Jordan. Herod died here. It was destroyed during the siege of Jerusalem, but rebuilt by Hadrian. Now a village, Er Riha, or Ain es Sultan (Elisha's fountain), where there are ruins to the west of Er Riha. (Lat. 31° 52′ N., Long. 34° 56′ E.) I.

Jerusalem, *i.e.* "habitation of peace," the ancient capital of the Jebusites, and originally known as Jebus, called Hierosolyma by the Greeks and Romans. It was the capital of Herod the Great, during whose reign Christ was born; but at the time of his death it had been annexed, together with Judea, to the Roman province of Syria. After the destruction by Titus, 70 A.C., the town was rebuilt and called Ælia Capitolina. The Arabs call it El-Kuds; *i.e.* "the sacred."

Joppa, a seaport, now Yafa. (Lat. 32° 4′ N., Long. 34° 44′ E.) I.

Jordan, the principal river of Palestine; it rises in the western slopes of Mount Hermon, flows through Lakes Samachonitis and Genesareth, and finally debouches into the Dead Sea (or Sea of Asphalte), which is 1,292 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The modern name of the river is Sheriat el Kebir, or Urdan. I.

Judea, in the Old Testament, is sometimes used for the whole of Palestine, but in the New Testament it includes only its southern portion, to the west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. I.

Laodicea in Phrygia Pacatiania, in Asia Minor, formerly called Diospolis, then Rhoas, and now Eskihissar. This is the town referred to in the Book of Revelation (i. 11, iii. 14). (Lat. 37° 53′ N., Long. 29° 10′ E.) Other towns of the same name on the coast of Syria (now Laokia), and at the northern extremity of Mount Lebanon (now Yushia).

Lasea, a city on the island of Crete, near the Samonium promontory. (Lat. 35° N., Long. 24° 45′ E.) II.

Libya, Northern Africa, to the west of Egypt.

Lycaonia, a district of Asia Minor. II.

Lycia, a province in Asia Minor. II.

Lydda, the Lod of the Old Testament, a city near Joppa, called Diospolis by the Romans; now a village, Lud. (Lat. 31° 57′ N., Long. 30° 53′ E.) I.

Lystra, a city in Lycaonia, near Lutik. (Lat. 37° 30′ N., Long. 32° 50 E.). II.

Macedonia, the country to the north of Thessaly and Epirus, on the Balkan peninsula. II.

Magdala, the traditionary birthplace of Mary Magdalene, on the Sea of Genesareth; now El Mejdel. (Lat. 32° 50′ N., Long. 35° 32′ E.) I.

Medians, the inhabitants of **Media**, an ancient kingdom, the capital of which was Ecbatana. Cyrus, in 560 B.C., united it with Persia.

Melita, an island in the Mediterranean, the modern Malta. (Lat. 36° N., Long. 14° 20′ E.) II.

Mesopotamia, the country between the Euphrates and Tigris.

Miletus, or **Miletum**, a flourishing city in Caria, the most ancient seat of Greek philosophy, destroyed by Darius and Alexander the Great; now a village, Palatia. (Lat. 37° 30′ N., Long. 27° 20′ E.) II.

Mitylene, a maritime city of the island of Lesbos, where arts and

sciences flourished; now Midilly. (Lat. 39° 10′ N., Long. 26° 30′ E.) II.

Myra, a city of Lycia, which still bears the same name. (Lat. 36° 15′ N., Long. 30′ E.) II.

Mysia, a province of Asia Minor. II.

Nain, a town of Galilee; now a poor village of the same name. (Lat. 32° 38′ N., Long. 35° 22′ E.) I.

Nazareth, a town of Galilee; now Nassera, or Nasirah, a small town. (Lat. 32° 42′ N., Long. 35° 18′ E.) I.

Neapolis a seaport on the Ægean Sea, originally in Thrace, then in Macedonia; now Kavala. (Lat. 40° 55′ N., Long. 24° 20′ E.) II.

Nephthalim, or **Naphtali**, the sixth son of Jacob, by Bilhah, to whose tribe was assigned a district in Northern Galilee.

Nicopolis (Titus iii. 12), probably in Epirus, opposite to Actium. (Lat. 39° N., Long. 20° 40′ E.) There were many other towns of the same name.

Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, captured and destroyed by the Medians 604 B.C.; now extensive ruins opposite to Mosul, on the river Tigris. (Lat. 36° 20′ N., Long. 43° 20′ E.)

Ninevites, the inhabitants of Nineveh.

Olives, Mount of, a hill east of Jerusalem; now Jebel et Tur.

Olivet, Mount, same as Mount of Olives.

Pamphylia, a province of Asia Minor. II.

Paphos, a town of Cyprus, with a celebrated Temple of Aphrodite; now Kuklia. (Lat. 34° 40′ N., Long. 32° 35′ E.) II.

Parthia, a country to the north-east of Media, the northern portion of modern Khorasan. The empire founded by the Parthians, 156 B.C., included all the countries between the Euphrates and the Indus, and between the Caspian Sea and the Indian Ocean, and was finally overthrown 226 A.C.

Patara, a coast town in Lycia, with a celebrated oracle of Apollo. (Lat. 36° 15′ N., Long. 29° 30′ E.) II.

Patmos, a rocky island in the Ægean Sea. A grotto in which John the evangelist is said to have lived is still shown there. (Lat. 37° 20′ N., Long. 26° 45′ E.) II.

Perga, a town near the coast town of Pamphylia, in Asia Minor. (Lat. 37° N., Long. 31° 10′ E.) II.

Pergamos, a city of Mysia; now Bergama. (Lat. 39° 5′ N., Long. 27° 20′ E.) II.

Phenice, a seaport of the island of Crete, near the modern Sphakia. (Lat. 35° 10′ N., Long. 24° 10′ E.) II.

Phenicia, the maritime district of Palestine, inhabited by one of the earliest civilised nations of the world. Its capital was Tyre. In the time of Christ it formed part of the Roman province of Syria. I.

Philadelphia, a town in Lydia, Asia Minor, the modern Alashehr. (Lat. 38° 20′ N., Long. 28° 30′ E.) II.

Philippi, a city of Macedonia, close to the frontiers of Thrace, with celebrated gold mines; now Filiba. (Lat. 41° N., Long. 24° 20′ E.) II.

Phrygia, a district of Asia Minor. II.

Pisidia, a province of Asia Minor. II.

Pontus, a province of Asia Minor. II.

Potter's Field, or "the field of blood," the same as Aceldama, which see.

Ptolemais, originally called Accho, a strong fortress and seaport town on the coast of Phenicia, known to the Crusaders as St. Jean d'Acre; now called Akka. (Lat. 32° 55′ N., Long. 35° 3′ E.) I.

Puteoli, a seaport town in Italy, the modern Pozzuoli, near Naples. (Lat. 140° 50′ N., Long. 14° 7′ E.) II.

Rama (Matt. ii. 18) is the Ramah of Jer. xl. 1, now Er Ram, north of Jerusalem. (Lat. 31° 52′ N., Long. 35° 13′ E.) I.

Red Sea, an arm of the Indian Ocean, formerly connected with the Mediterranean by a strait, the site of which is marked by the Suez Canal.

Rhegium, a maritime town in Southern Italy, now called Reggio. (Lat. 38° 5′ N., Long. 15° 40′ E.) II.

Rhodes, an island near the coast of Asia Minor. (Lat. 36° N., Long. 28′ E.) II.

Rome, the capital of Italy.

Salamis, a city on the east coast of Cyprus, with a celebrated Temple of Jupiter; now Hagios Sergios. (Lat. 35° 10′ N., Long. 33° 55′ E.) II.

Salmone, a promontory of Crete, opposite Rhodes; now called Cape Sidero. (Lat. 35° 20′ N., Long. 26° 20′ E.) II.

Samaria, a city in Central Palestine, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Israel, partly rebuilt by Herod the Great, and called by him Sebaste, in honour of the Roman Emperor Augustus; now Sebastie. (Lat. 32° 17′ N., Long. 35° 12′ E.) Also the entire central portion of Palestine, of which it is the capital. I.

Samos, an island near the coast of Ionia, now called Sissam or Samo, ancient capital. (Lat. 37° 42′ N., Long. 27° E.) II.

Samothracia, an island near the coast of Thrace; now Samothraki. (Lat. 40° 27′ N., Long. 25° 35′ E.) II.

Sardis, capital of Lydia; now a village, Sart. (Lat. 38° 30′ N., Long. 28° 5′ E.) II.

Sarepta, a town in Phenicia; now Sarafend. (Lat. 33° 25′ N., Long. 35° 17′ E.) II.

Saron, a fertile plain along the Mediterranean, between Joppa and Mount Carmel. I.

Seleucia (Seleucia Pieria), maritime town in Syria, not far from Antioch; now Sueidie. (Lat. 36° 10′ N., Long. 35° 55′ E.) II.

Sidon, city of Phenicia, assigned to Asser, but never captured by the Jews; now Saida. (Lat. 33° 33′ N., Long. 35° 22′ E.) I.

Siloam, Pool of, outside of Jerusalem. Near it the tower referred to by Luke (xiii. 4); also a village, Kefr Siluan. I.

Sina, the same as Sinai, the celebrated mountain in Stony Arabia. (About Lat. 28° 30′ N., Long. 34° E.) II.

Smyrna, a commercial city of Lydia. (Lat. 38° 25′ N., Long. 27° 10′ E.) II.

Sodom and **Gomorrha**, the two cities of Siddim destroyed as recorded Genesis xviii. and xix.; they stood probably near the southern extremity of the Dead Sea.

Spain, the modern country bearing the same name.

Sychar is considered by Robinson to be identical with Sychem; others place it a mile farther east, where there is a village, with ruins, called Askar.

Sychem, or **Sichem**, an old city in Samaria, subsequently called Flavia Neapolis, after Flavius Vespasianus, who restored it; now Nablus, a busy town. (Lat. 32° 13′ N., Long. 35° 15′ E.) I.

Syracuse, a well-known town of the island of Sicily; now Syracusa. (Lat. 37° 3′ N., Long. 15° 18′ E.) II.

Syria, a Roman province in Western Asia, still known by that name; it included Syria Superior, or Syria properly so called, Phenice, and Palæstina.

Syro-Phenicians, the inhabitants of the inland part of Phenicia, which touched upon Syria proper.

Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, birthplace of St. Paul; now Tersus. (Lat. 36° 55′ N., Long. 34° 50′ E.) II.

Thessalonica, capital of Macedonia; now Saloniki. (Lat. 40° 35′ N., Long. 23° E.) II.

Three Taverns (Tres Tabernæ), on the Appian Road, between Rome and Tarracina.

Thyatira, a town in Lydia, to the north of Sardis; now Akhissar. (Lat. 38° 53′ N., Long. 27° 57′ E.) II.

Tiberias, a city on the Sea of Genesareth, built by Herod Antipas, and named in honour of the Emperor Tiberius. For a time it was the capital of Galilee; now Tabarie. (Lat. 32° 47′ N., Long. 35° 33′ E.) I.

Trachonitis, a district to the east of the Jordan, with immense fields of lava. (Centre about Lat. 33° N., Long. 36° 15′ E.) I.

Troas (Alexandria Troas), a seaport; now Eski-Stamboul. (Lat. 39° 40′ N., Long. 26° 10′ E.) II.

Trogyllium, a town and promontory between Ephesus and the mouth of the Meander. (Lat. 37° 40′ N., Long. 27° E.) II.

Tyre, the famous capital of Phenicia; now Sur. (Lat. 33° 16′ N., Long. 35° 12′ E.) I.

Zabulon, or **Zebulon,** sixth son of Jacob and Leah, to whose tribe was assigned a district in Western Galilee, to the south of that of Nephthalim.

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THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

Presage of the birth of Christ. Prediction of the birth of John the Baptist. Salutation of the blessed Virgin by the angel. Visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth. Birth of the Baptist.

NO event in the providence of God has more remarkably displayed his wisdom and power than the glorious manner in which he brought life and immortality to light by the gospel of his only Son, manifested in the flesh.

The mind of man cannot be more delightfully employed than in the contemplation of the wisdom and goodness of the Omnipotent Creator of the universe, who, by the least suspected means and weakest instruments, confirmed and established that glorious gospel on which depend all our hopes of eternal salvation.

Notwithstanding the strength and number of its enemies, the church of Christ grew, from the most inconsiderable beginnings, to an immense fabric or building in the Lord; nor shall the united efforts of earth and hell be able to prevail against it. As it was planted, so it was reared by an Almighty hand, which, like the careful husbandman, pruned and cultivated each tender sprig till it arrived at full perfection; or, to use the words of our blessed Lord, "The least of all seeds grew up, and waxed a great tree, spreading out its branches, and filling the earth."

Thus prevailed eternal Truth, although opposed both by the inveterate Jews and idolatrous heathen; though Herod and Pontius Pilate,

with the Gentiles and people of Israel, "gathered themselves together against the Lord, and against his Anointed;" for the doctrine of God confounded the wisdom of the former, and overcame the folly of the latter.

If we survey the works of a stupendous Creator, we shall find that few arrived at perfection at once. This

The Holy Family and St. John. (*Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.*)

observation is amply confirmed by the various productions in the natural, and changes in the moral world. The Supreme Being, who conducts all his operations according to his infinite wisdom, appears to have retained the same maxim in the regulating of his kindest design to the sons of men. The Divine mind and will were not at first revealed in their clearest evidence and fullest splendour. The dawn, in a spiritual as well as in a natural sense, preceded the meridian glory; the former revelation was but a type or earnest of the latter, and, in comparison with it, intricate and mysterious.

The all-gracious God, as it seemed best to his unerring wisdom, was pleased by degrees to open and unfold his glorious counsels; and man by degrees attained to the knowledge of the great plan of salvation, and the means used by its great Author to promote and establish it.

Some time before the incarnation of the blessed Jesus an opinion prevailed amongst the pious part of the Jews that the Great Jehovah would condescend to favour them with a clearer revelation of his mind and will, by the mission of some eminent person qualified from above to instruct them in the same. This opinion was founded on the predictions of the ancient prophets, who had described, with the utmost beauty and clearness, the person, character, and glory of the Messiah, appointed by God, in his own time, to declare his eternal counsels to mankind.

Relying on the fulfilment of these prophecies, the devout persons amongst the Jews imagined the time appointed by God at hand, and that the promised Messiah would shortly make his appearance, and therefore are said to have "waited night and day for the consolation of Israel." These people, at that time grievously op-

pressed by the Roman power, and consequently anxious of regaining their liberty, as well as revenging themselves on their tyrannical oppressors, waited the accomplishment of the prophecies with the most solicitous desire. But this opinion of the approach of a general Deliverer extended much further than the country of the Jews; for, through their connections with so many countries, their disputes with the learned men amongst the heathens, and the translation of the Old Testament into a language now almost general, their religion greatly prevailed in the East; and, consequently, their opinion that a prince would appear in the kingdom of Judea who would dispel the mists of ignorance, deliver the Jews from the Roman yoke, and spread his dominion from one end of the world to the other.

While the Eastern world was fraught with these sanguine hopes, the very angel who had appeared to Daniel the prophet with certain information as to the period of the Messiah's coming, as well as his transactions in this lower world, was sent to Zacharias, a pious priest, while he was executing his office before God, in the order of his course (which was to burn incense in the temple of the Lord), to foretell that a child should spring from him and his wife Elizabeth, though they were stricken in years, who should be endowed with extraordinary gifts from heaven, and honoured with being the forerunner of the Saviour of the world.

Zacharias, when he saw the angel, though he knew him to be of heavenly extraction, knew not the subject of his mission, and therefore discovered a mixture of fear and surprise; but the aërial ambassador cheered his desponding soul with this kind address: "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer

The Prophet Daniel and King David. (*Raffaelle.*)

is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." That he waited day and night for the consolation of Israel he well knew, which is all we can understand by his prayer being heard; for it was unnatural for him to think that he and his wife Eliza-

beth, who were advanced in years, should have a son; nay, he intimates his doubt concerning it in these words: "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Besides, he was a priest of the course of Abiah, whose particular office was to pray in behalf of the people for public and national blessings; so that it is very reasonable to think that on all occasions of public worship he prayed most earnestly for the accomplishment of the prophecies relative to the appearance of the long-expected Messiah, who was promised as a general blessing to all the nations of the earth.

The Prophet Daniel. (Michel Angelo)

That this was the great subject of his prayer appears from the declaration of Gabriel: The prayer thou hast directed with sincerity to an Almighty ear, concerning the coming of the Messiah, "is heard; and behold thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son," who shall prepare the way for the mighty Redeemer of Israel. The old priest, indeed, was as much astonished at the subject of his mission as he was at the appearance of the messenger; and esteeming it impossible that his wife, thus advanced in years, should conceive a son, weakly demanded a sign to confirm his belief in the fulfilment of the promise, though he knew the authority of the angel was derived from the God of Truth. But as it is the lot of humanity to err, Zacharias did not reflect for the time that nothing was impossible to Omnipotence, as well as that it was not the first instance of an aged woman conceiving and becoming the mother of a living child. The least reflection would have reminded him that Sarah bore Isaac when she was far advanced in years, and that Samuel was born of a woman who had been long reputed barren.

His curiosity was, indeed, gratified, but in a manner that carried with it at once a confirmation of the promise

and a punishment of his unbelief. As he had verbally testified his doubt of the fulfilment of the prediction of the angel, he was punished with the loss of his speech, which was to continue to the very day in which the prediction should be accomplished: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

Zacharias soon received an awful testimony of the divinity of the mission of Gabriel, who was no sooner departed than he was struck dumb; for when he came to pray, in the course of his office, during the oblation of the incense, he could not utter a word, and was under a necessity of making signs to the people that an angel had appeared to him in the temple, and that he was deprived of the faculty of speech as a punishment for his doubting the fulfilment of an event foretold to him by his heavenly visitant.

Soon after Zacharias departed to his own house (the days of his ministration being accomplished), his wife Elizabeth, according to the prediction of the angel, conceived, and retired into a private place, where she lived five months in the uninterrupted exercises of piety, devotion, and contemplation on the mysterious providences of the Almighty, and his amazing goodness to the sinful children of men.

When Elizabeth was advanced six months in her pregnancy, the same heavenly ambassador was sent to a poor virgin, called Mary, who lived in obscurity in Nazareth, under the care of Joseph, to whom she was espoused. This man and woman

The Annunciation. (*Guido.*)

were both lineally descended from the house of David, from whose loins it was foretold the great Messiah should spring.

This virgin, being ordained by the Most High to be mother of the great

Saviour of the world, was saluted by the angel in language becoming her lofty destiny: "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women!" Such an address, from so exalted a being, greatly alarmed the meek and humble Virgin, whose fears, however, were quickly allayed and her heart encouraged by the angel's relating, in most rapturous terms, the subject of his embassy, which was to assure her that she was chosen by God to the greatest honour which could be conferred on a mortal, and which would perpetuate her memory; an honour no less than that of being mother of the promised and long-expected Messiah, who upon earth should be called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins, be the restorer of human nature, and the procuring cause of eternal bliss to sinners, who had forfeited the favour and incurred the resentment of an offended God; but that this Divine Person was considered in heaven as the Son of the Most High God, to whom should be given, by his Almighty Father, the throne of David, his earthly father, on which he should preside, and which—being the whole church of Christ, the house of Jacob, the spiritual Israel, or the kingdom of the Messiah—should continue for ever and ever.

The astonished Virgin, unmindful likewise that Isaiah had long since prophesied "that a virgin should conceive and bear a son," thought her virginity an insurmountable barrier to the fulfilment of the prophecy, especially as such an event had never previously occurred since the creation of the world, and therefore required of the angel an explanation of the manner in which such a circumstance could be effected.

This desire by no means implies a forgetfulness that with God all things are possible, but only serves to prove the weakness of her apprehension on the one hand, or her diffidence and sense of her own unworthiness on the other.

The angel, therefore, perceiving the goodness of her disposition, notwithstanding some little proof of human weakness and shortness of sight, vouchsafed an immediate answer to her inquiry: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall cover thee;" or, in other words, this miraculous event shall be brought about by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and wonderful exertion of the power of the Most High. "As thy conception is effected by the immediate interposition of the Holy Ghost, therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." To confirm her faith in the glorious message, the heavenly messenger observed to her that her cousin Elizabeth, notwithstanding her advanced years and reputed barrenness, was above six months pregnant, assigning this incontestable argument for the miraculous incidents, "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

This reply not only removed all her

doubts and fears, but filled her with inexpressible joy, so that she even anticipated the promised felicity; for she, with the rest of the daughters of Jacob, had long indulged a hope of being selected by God to be the honoured mother of the Saviour of Israel; and therefore, on her being assured that such great happiness was destined her by the omnipotent Disposer of all events, she thus expressed her reliance on the fulfilment of the Divine promise, and perfect acquiescence in the pleasure of the Almighty: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

The Nativity. (*Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.*)

The angel had no sooner departed than Mary set out for the mountainous country of Judea, though at a very remote distance from Nazareth, in order to rejoice with her cousin Elizabeth in the joyful news she had received from the angel concerning her. The rapture and delight which filled the minds of Mary, Joseph, and Elizabeth, on the occasion of this salutation, can alone be expressed by the affecting description recorded by the evangelist Luke, who is peculiar for the beauty of his style and elegance of his expressions.

That evangelist writes that the salutation of Mary had such an effect upon Elizabeth that, on her hearing of the miraculous event which had befallen the Virgin, the babe leaped in her womb, and that she, being inspired with a holy delight on the approaching prospect of the nativity of her Saviour, exclaimed with rapture, "And whence is this to me, that

the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke i. 43.) Nor did her ecstasy cease with this token of humility and joy on the important event, in the ardour of which she herself evinced a prophetic influence, which, while it amazed the blessed Virgin, could not fail in establishing her belief in what the angel had foretold, for she repeated the very words expressed by the angel in his salutation of the holy Virgin, "Blessed art thou among women!" together with a quotation from the Psalms, and "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"

For as Mary conceived the seed long promised and earnestly desired, —the seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed,— he could not but be blessed himself, according to the words of the Psalmist: "His name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him Blessed." The happy Virgin, catching the holy flame from the aged Elizabeth, broke out into an humble acknowledgment of her unworthiness, and the wonderful grace of the Almighty in appointing her to the exalted honour of bearing in her womb the Redeemer of Israel, as expressed in those sublime words, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," &c.

Thus having by this visit confirmed herself in the belief of the prediction of the angel Gabriel, when the period of Elizabeth's pregnancy approached, she returned to Nazareth, having resided in Judea about three months.

Soon after the departure of Mary, Elizabeth brought forth her son, the appointed harbinger of the King of Glory; and on the eighth day after his birth, according to the Judaical custom, he was circumcised, and called, according to the appointment of the angel, John, alluding, in the Hebrew tongue, to the gracious display of the wisdom and goodness God was about to manifest to the world by the spreading of the gospel of his Son, of whom this John was the appointed forerunner.

This promise being thus fulfilled, the aged priest was restored to his speech, and immediately broke out in praise and rapture at the marvellous works of God, in strains which astonished all around him.

This surprising event greatly alarmed the people of the adjacent country, who were divided in their opinions concerning a child whose birth was attended with so many extraordinary circumstances. The incidents of it were indeed worthy of general admiration: that he who was to be the forerunner of the mighty Saviour of Israel should not make his entrance on life in an obscure and common manner, but with particular tokens of the favour of Heaven, in order to attract the observation of his countrymen, and excite their attention to that ministry which he was called to by God, even the preparation of the people for the reception of the Messiah, who was shortly to appear in the flesh.

It is observable that the Baptist, from his infancy, displayed great qualities both of mind and body; for such was his strength of constitution, through the blessing of the God of Nature, that he lived till near the thirtieth year of his age, when his public ministry began, in the

Infant Christ, St. John, and Mary. (*Raffaelle.*)

mountains and desert country of Judea, bereft of almost all the comforts of life. But at length the prophecy of the good old Zacharias, relating to his future elevation, was literally fulfilled: "Thou, O child,

shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

As Joseph had abstained from all matrimonial intercourse with his wife, he was not a little alarmed when, shortly after her return to Nazareth, she discovered evident signs of pregnancy; nay, so far was he wrought on by the circumstance, that he absolutely resolved on a dissolution of the marriage; but previous to such a rigorous procedure, on questioning her concerning the same, she minutely related to him the particulars of the vision from the angel, and the extraordinary event that had befallen Zacharias and Elizabeth.

Notwithstanding this ingenuous declaration, Joseph's suspicions continued, and suggested to him that this might be a device, concerted by the friends of Mary, to exempt her from that disgrace which must attend a divorce on such a pretence. However, he resolved to execute his purpose as privately as possible, without assigning the cause for it, which would have subjected her to the penalty of death.

But, on cooler reflection, he called to mind the sovereign power of Omnipotence; for which reason, however opposite her case might be to the nature of things in general, her vindication of herself might be well grounded. He now thought himself bound by every tie of justice and duty to preserve her character inviolable, though, as he was a just man, and most religious observer of the law, the assertions she made did not appear to him sufficient to justify him in retaining her in his house.

While he was thus ruminating on this event he was overtaken with slumber, and received in a vision a communication from the angel of the Lord which fully revealed the cause and manner of Mary's pregnancy, dispelling his doubts, and encouraging him to take home his falsely-suspected spouse: "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

No sooner did the morning dawn appear than Joseph arose from his couch, and cheerfully obeyed the commands of the Most High, by relating to his wife his assurance of her innocence, and restoring her to his favour. While he related to her the manner of this extraordinary revelation by a messenger from the heavenly Canaan, he discovered in her a remarkable chastity of heart, entirely conformable to so mysterious an opera-

tion, and knew her not till she had brought forth the great Redeemer of Israel.

Thus was fulfilled that which was foretold by the prophets, and particularly the prediction of Isaiah, which imported that a virgin should bring forth a son. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," which being interpreted is, God with us. (Isa. vii. 14.)

Madonna and Child. (*Carlo Dolci.*)

CHAPTER II.

General decree for taxation published. Birth of Christ. Declaration of the same to the shepherds. Circumcision and presentation of Christ in the temple. The wise men of the East worship the Holy Child. Flight of Joseph into Egypt. Massacre of the infants at Bethlehem. Death of Herod. Return of Joseph out of Egypt.

AUGUSTUS CÆSAR, the Roman Emperor, having at this time issued an edict for a general taxation on all the nations, cities, and towns subject to the empire, King Herod, in consequence of that decree, commanded all under his government to muster in the city of his people, or place of his descent, that an estimate might be taken of their persons and effects. Pursuant to this order, Joseph and Mary, as descendants from the line of David, departed from Nazareth, where they then resided, and came to Bethlehem, a city of Judea, the place of the nativity of David and his ancestors.

So numerous were the people that repaired to this place on account of the general decree, that every dwelling was occupied; and Joseph and Mary, though they could not depart thence till after the taxation, were forced to take up their residence in a humble stable, the spot in which it pleased the Divine wisdom should be born the Lord of life and glory, who, as a perfect example of humility to all his followers, was to make his entrance into, and his exit out of, the lower world in the same mean and humble manner. In this lowly tenement, then, the blessed Virgin brought forth her first-born Godlike Son, wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him (having no better place) in a manger.

It is worthy of note that all the generations of the intervening spaces between three of the most remarkable periods relative to the house of David and the birth of our blessed Saviour are exactly the same; for the evangelist Matthew informs us that all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, and from David unto the Babylonish captivity are fourteen generations, and from the Babylonish captivity unto

The Infant Christ

the birth of Christ are also fourteen generations. The same evangelist also traces his genealogy from Abraham, and proves his direct descent from that father of the faithful, through the line of David, from race to race, to that of the humble Virgin and the aged Joseph.

But to return to the immediate subject of our history. The humble manner and place of our Lord's birth, which demand our highest admiration and wonder, did not long eclipse the glory of his descent, a heavenly messenger being despatched from above to warn mankind of their Saviour's incarnation. It pleased the wise Disposer of all things, by this holy angel, first to make known to some pious shepherds, who were watching their flock by night in the neighbouring fields, the birth of the long-promised, long-expected Messiah. The radiance which shone around them terrified the astonished peasants; but, for the purpose of dissipating their fears and confirming their joys, the Divine messenger interposed, and thus addressed them: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke ii. 10, &c.)

The glorious news was no sooner proclaimed than a number of the celestial choir were heard to resound the praises of the Almighty for this transcendent display of his goodness to sinful men: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" Transported with the happy tidings of the birth of the Redeemer of Israel, the angel no sooner departed than the shepherds hastened to Bethlehem in quest of the babe, whom, according to the information of the sacred missionary, they found wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger. This event, so exactly conformable to the angel's prediction, equally delighted and amazed them; nor could they conceal the purport of his mission, but published abroad all they had seen or heard concerning the Holy Child.

Having viewed with joy and wonder their long-expected Saviour, and offered their grateful praises to God for the manifestation of his goodness to mankind, they departed, with hearts filled with love and gratitude, still glorifying the Almighty Parent of universal nature.

After the expiration of eight days from the birth of the Holy Infant, he was circumcised according to the Mosaic institution, and his name was called Jesus; that appellation being given him by the angel who appeared to the Virgin before her conception.

Born under the Mosaic law, it was requisite, in order to fulfil all that is spoken of him in the Scriptures, that he should conform to a custom which characterised the Jewish nation. Besides, as all the promises made to

Abraham were to be fulfilled in the Messiah, it was necessary he should receive the seal of circumcision, in order to prove his descent from the patriarch, concerning whom it was foretold, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The Presentation in the Temple. (*Rubens.*)

As a further reason for our Lord's compliance with this Jewish institution, we may urge the propriety of his finishing the former dispensation by an exact adherence to its rules, as he was about to establish another and better covenant, which could not be effected more fully than by conforming to that sacrament which was of Divine injunction, and indispensably requisite to admission into the former.

As the same institution also required that every first-born son, without any regard to circumstance or family, should be presented to the Lord in the temple by delivering him into the hand of the priest, and paying five shekels, together with an offering, which, from the poorer sort, consisted of a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons, a ceremony in commemoration of the Divine mercy in sparing the first-born in Israel, when those of Egypt, both men and beasts, were destroyed, his parents, having tarried at Bethlehem till the days of Mary's purification were accomplished, brought the child Jesus to Jerusalem, and there presented him in the temple to the Lord, in the manner just described, with the offering allowed to the poorer sort of people—a repeated instance of the exact obedience of the immaculate Jesus to the ceremonial law, as well as of the poverty of his parents, though descended from a royal house.

During the presentation of the Holy Infant, Simeon entered the temple, a pious and venerable old man, who, with all the devout, had "waited day and night for the consolation of Israel," and to whom it had been revealed by the Spirit of Truth that he should not depart this mortal life till he had seen the Lord of life and salvation.

Accordingly, it was signified to

him by the Holy Ghost, at whose instance he came at that precise time into the temple, that the child there presented was the long-expected Messiah, even the Redeemer of Israel. In an ecstasy of joy he embraced the heavenly Infant in his arms, and broke out into this rhapsody: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." (Luke ii. 29, &c.)

The exultation of Simeon astonished the parents of our Lord: not from its unworthiness of the Divine subject, to which are due strains superior either to those of men or angels, but as evincing the old man's certain knowledge that the Child was the promised Messiah, though he was an absolute stranger. But their surprise was quickly removed by Simeon's saying unto Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;" or, in other words, This is the stumbling-block and rock of offence which it was long foretold by God should be laid in Zion, and which should occasion the fall of many in Israel; for through the humble manner of his birth, and his abject state upon earth, he became despised and rejected of men; yet he is set for the rising again of many, who shall rely on his merits and submit to his government.

Commentators are divided in their opinions concerning this old Simeon. Some think he was of the order of priests, and that he uttered the words we have cited above while he was presenting the child to the Lord in the office of his function. But as the evangelist, who recites in a particular manner the presentation of our blessed Lord, is silent on that head, it appears little more than conjecture.

Others affirm he was Simon the Just, a disciple of the famous Hillel, the master of Gamaliel, under whom the apostle Paul was educated, and that while he was attempting to explain to the people that passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," it was revealed to him that he should see with mortal eyes the promised Messiah; and that, on his beholding the Child and his mother in the temple, he broke out into that well-known rhapsody. But if a man of his rank and eminence had made such a declaration in favour of the Divinity of Christ's mission, it is reasonable to think it would have had more weight with the generality of the Jews than it appears to have had. Besides, it is remarkable that the Almighty at that time was pleased to reveal his designs with respect to the Messiah not to the great, the wise, and the learned, but to the poor and illiterate; such as Joseph, a carpenter; Zacharias, an ordinary priest; and a company of shepherds; therefore, as the point is not settled, we presume to offer it as our opinion that this old man, to whom God was pleased to make so extraordinary a revelation

concerning the Saviour of the world, was a plain man, eminent for the goodness of his heart rather than the knowledge of his head, and who possessed more piety and devotion than learning or earthly pomp.

A certain aged prophetess, called Anna, who had a long time waited for the redemption of Israel, entering the temple at the instant in which the pious Simeon embraced and exulted in the birth of the heavenly Infant, and finding that he was the promised Messiah, likewise joined with him in praising God, and went forth and declared the glad tidings

Adoration of the Magi. (*Ghirlandajo.*)

of salvation to all the faithful in those parts.

Having thus in every respect complied with the ceremonies and rites contained in the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary, with the child Jesus, entered into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth, but did not long abide there; for, having adjusted their affairs, they returned again to Bethlehem, the place of our Lord's nativity.

This step seems to have been pursued in consequence of their opinion that it was necessary, in order to his

being acknowledged the Messiah sent of God, that he should reside some time in the place of his birth. Whatever might be their motive for removal, it is evident from Scripture that while they were in Bethlehem with their Son, certain Eastern philosophers, called magi, or wise men, came, in consequence of the appearance they had seen, to Jerusalem, and inquired for the King of the Jews, declaring they had seen his star in their own quarter, and were come to pay him the adorations due to his dignity.

Various conjectures have been formed by the learned concerning this star which is said to have appeared in the East. Some think it was the Spirit of God, others an angel, some a comet, others a luminous appearance, &c. A modern writer supposes it to have been the glory that surrounded the angels who appeared to the shepherds at Bethlehem on the night of our Lord's nativity.

But notwithstanding these uncertain conjectures, the star answered the end designed, and directed the magi to the spot where resided the Lord of life and glory. Some men, too wise to admit of the evidences to the truth of Revelation, have sceptically inquired how these Eastern magi could arrive at any knowledge that the Jews expected the Messiah, and why, therefore, on the appearance of this new star in the firmament, they should apprehend it pointed out the birth of the great Redeemer of Israel. The learned assertors of the Christian cause, in answer to these queries, observe, that an opinion of the approach of the Messiah's kingdom had long prevailed all over the East; nay, this is declared in profane history by Suetonius, Tacitus, and Josephus.

The reason of this prevailing opinion is very obvious. The Jews conceived mighty expectations of the Messiah from the many prophecies concerning him recorded in their own language, and the Arabians from the prophecies to the same import made to Abraham; it being certain that those people retained a traditional knowledge of this promise, and the words of Balaam, who was an Arabian prophet, "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel," &c., which every impartial reader must acknowledge rather refers to the appearance of the Messiah than to any other incident whatsoever.

The other Eastern nations derived their expectations of the Messiah from their commercial connections with the Jews and Arabians, but more especially from the Jews, who, being scattered over the whole country of the East, spread their religion wherever they came, which occasioned several Roman historians to take notice of the prevalence of that opinion.

Nay, the expectation of the Messiah being born in Judea was strongly impressed on the minds of the followers of Zoroaster, who reformed the religion of the Persians, and who, being servant to the prophet Daniel, was particularly favoured with reve-

lations concerning the appearance of the Messiah.

From these considerations it evidently appears that this opinion prevailed throughout the East, and that the magi might with much reason, on the appearance of the star, repair to Jerusalem in quest of the promised Saviour of Israel.

But to leave this subject as not immediately appertaining to our purpose, the whole city of Jerusalem was alarmed at the unexpected arrival of the Eastern magi—an event which much perplexed the tyrant Herod, whose ambitious mind maintained the utmost aversion to the very thought of a rival or competitor, and consequently could not brook a report that favoured the news of the birth of the King of the Jews.

Disguising, however, his vindictive principle, he received the magi with seeming respect, attended to the design of their errand with affected complacency, and, to gratify their curiosity, summoned a general council, and demanded of them where Christ should be born. Of this they did not long keep him in suspense; for, well remembering that the prophets had particularly foretold the place of his birth, they replied to the demand of their monarch, "In Bethlehem of Judea;" and to confirm their answer, cited prophetic authority: "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." (Matt. ii. 6.) The tyrant king, in consequence of the reply from the supreme council of the nation, directed the magi to Bethlehem, as the place, according to ancient prophecy, designed for the honour of our Saviour's nativity, earnestly entreating them, at the same time, immediately on their finding out the Child, to send him word, that he might repair thither, and pay his adoration to him also.

But this was mere pretence and vile hypocrisy; for so far was Herod from entertaining any religious regard for the infant Jesus, that he determined in his heart to destroy him as soon as found, looking on him as designed for a temporal prince, who would expel him or his descendants from the throne of Judea, instead of a prince whose kingdom was wholly spiritual, and whose throne was not to be established upon earth, but in the heavenly Jerusalem.

We have no more convincing evidence of the divinity of our Saviour's mission than his miraculous preservation from the designs of the ambitious Herod. The tyrant, in this case, acted with the utmost subtlety: he declined accompanying the wise men in person, nor did he even send attendants with them, who, under the guise of honouring them, might secretly inform him of the abode of the Messiah, or actually destroy both the Child and his parents; in reality, he acted as if the event gave him no concern, and in a manner wholly different from the general expectation of the people.

However, the magi, having obtained the intelligence they sought in Jerusalem, set forward under the guidance of the same star which had conducted them from their own country, but had left them on their arrival in Judea, which was the cause of their directing their course to the capital, in order to seek that information which by the desertion of the star became requisite. Thus we find that the design of the Almighty in directing the Eastern magi to the capital of Judea was that the whole nation might be made acquainted with the cause of their journey.

Accordingly, no sooner had they proceeded from Jerusalem on their way to Bethlehem than their kind conductor again appeared, went before

The Flight into Egypt. (*Portaels.*)

them to the very city, and fixed on the habitation of the heavenly Infant. Guided by this celestial conductor, they entered the house, and prostrating themselves at the sacred feet of their spiritual King, presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Having thus accomplished the design of their expedition, they proposed, according to promise, returning to Jerusalem; but being diverted from that intention by a dream, in which they were warned by God of Herod's design, they pursued another course towards their own country, and thus defeated his malicious purpose.

But it is natural and reasonable to suppose that the end of the Divine Wisdom, in directing these Eastern

magi to the kingdom of Judea to worship the child Jesus, was not merely to gratify the curiosity of the wise men, because the event promoted many other very important designs, some of which it may be useful here to mention. It proved to succeeding ages the great expectation the Gentiles formed of the appearance of the Messiah, and consequently established the truth of those prophecies which related to that event, as well as excited in the minds of men the most sanguine hopes and longing desires.

As these magi doubtless reported, on their return to their own country, the particulars they had heard and seen in the kingdom of Judea relative to the Messiah, such report must certainly have promoted the belief of

The Repose in Egypt. (*Claude.*)

the gospel in those parts, when afterwards preached there by the apostles. The expedition of the wise men was the cause of the answer of the Sanhedrim, which unanimously declared it to be the opinion of all the Jewish rabbies then living that, according to ancient prophecies, Bethlehem was the place appointed by the Almighty to give birth to the promised Messiah.

It also contributed to another valuable purpose, in that the offerings of the wise men procured a subsistence for the holy family in Egypt, whither they were soon after warned to fly, in order to escape the vengeance of the enraged king; for no sooner had the

wise men departed from Bethlehem than Joseph was warned by a heavenly messenger of the barbarous purpose of Herod, and commanded to fly into Egypt, with the young Child and his mother.

Joseph, in obedience to the command of the Almighty, rose that

Murder of the Innocents. (*Nicaise de Keyser.*)

night, and fled into Egypt, "and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son." This prophecy, which is quoted from Hosea, seems originally to refer to the Israelites, though the evangelist's reference will be amply justified by considering that the Egyptian cap-

tivity alludes to their subjection of the Israelites to great hardships, and their deliverance from the same by an Almighty hand.

Now, as the departure of the holy family into Egypt was in obedience to the Divine command, in order to protect the holy Jesus from the incensed Herod, the application of the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," appears very just as well as elegant. The king of Judea long waited, with most earnest expectation, the return of the wise men, anxious to glut his full resentment on the innocent Jesus, till, from their long delay, he began to suspect that his designs were frustrated by some extraordinary interposition of Providence.

At length, irritated by disappointment, he resolved to accomplish by cruelty a project he could not effect by art, and accordingly issued orders to a large body of soldiers to go throughout Bethlehem and the neighbouring villages, and massacre all the children they could find therein that were two years old and under; thinking that the infant Jesus, whom, as a prince, he both envied and dreaded, would fall in the general slaughter. But the heavenly Missionary was sheltered from above; nor was the relentless king permitted to impede the design of an Almighty Creator. However, the cities through which the soldiers carried the destructive sword exhibited such scenes of horror and distress as could not fail to thrill every soul not entirely lost to humanity. No sound was heard but the piercing cries of parents, the groans of expiring babes, and a general imprecation of vengeance on the merciless tyrant. But he did not long survive this cruel decree, being swept from his throne by a nauseous disease, to answer for his conduct at the bar of a tremendous Judge.

No description can paint the horror of such a scene of relentless cruelty in a more glaring light than the verse quoted by the evangelist Matthew from the prophet Jeremiah: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." This prophecy must not be understood literally, but descriptively, or as a figure used to display the horror of the scene as there applied by the evangelist, in which acceptation it has a peculiar beauty; representing Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, buried many years ago in the fields of Bethlehem, awakened by the cries of slaughtered infants, bursting even the chains of death, and lamenting the hapless fate of the murdered innocents surrounding her.

The tyrant Herod being thus cut off from the face of the earth, Joseph was warned by a heavenly messenger to return to the land of Israel. The good old man obeyed the Almighty command; and it appears that he had a great desire of residing in Judea,

and very probably in the city of Bethlehem; but hearing that Herod was succeeded in his throne by his son Archelaus, and fearing that he might pursue the barbarous design of his father, he directed his course

Jesus going with his Mother and Joseph to Nazareth. (Dobson, A.R.A.)

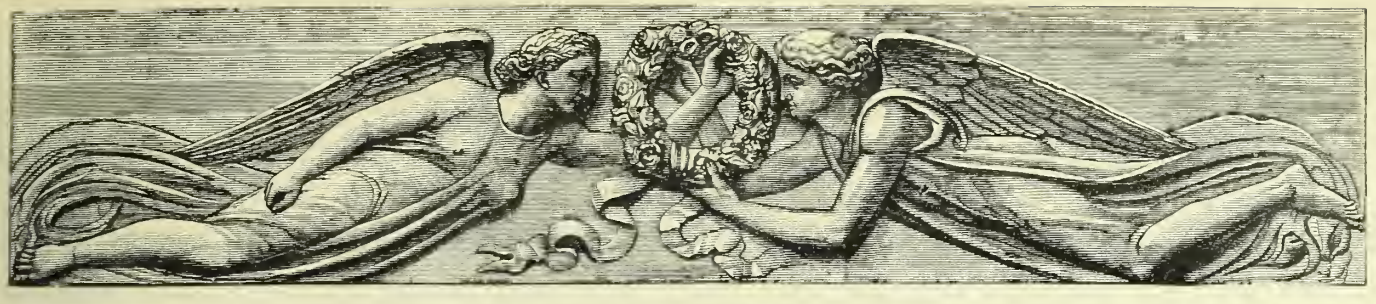
another way; but being warned again by a heavenly mission, he retired into Galilee, then under the government of a mild and benevolent prince, called Antepas, and took up his abode at Nazareth, where the particular

circumstances attending the birth of the blessed Jesus were not generally known. The evangelist affirms that Joseph, with the Infant and his mother, resided in Nazareth, where the holy Jesus spent his youth: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

The advocates of infidelity, whose notice the smallest inaccuracy in the sacred Scriptures has not escaped, have not failed to observe that the evangelist refers to what he cannot justify from any of the prophetical writings, in which there are no such words to be found as "He shall be called a Nazarene." But the evangelist may with justice be vindicated from the charge of impropriety by reminding these sceptics that though the very words are not to be found, the allusion is just, and consequently the application. This expression refers to the general contempt and ridicule in which the Israelites held the Galileans, and especially the Nazarenes, who were even despised by the Galileans themselves, insomuch that the word Nazareth became a term of reproach.

Now, as the prophets in general foretold the disgrace and infamy through which the blessed Jesus should pass, they consequently foretold he should become a Nazarene, or exposed to every token of contempt and ridicule, of which this appellation at that time was a remarkable instance.

It is evident that our Lord's residing at Nazareth remarkably tended to the fulfilment of those prophecies, because in the course of his public ministry he was frequently reproached with the same, and his countrymen often urged it as a reason for their disregard of his doctrine. But the stubbornness of unbelief will never admit of conviction; we have, therefore, added these remarks to confirm the faith of the Christian rather than convince the obstinate infidel.



CHAPTER III.

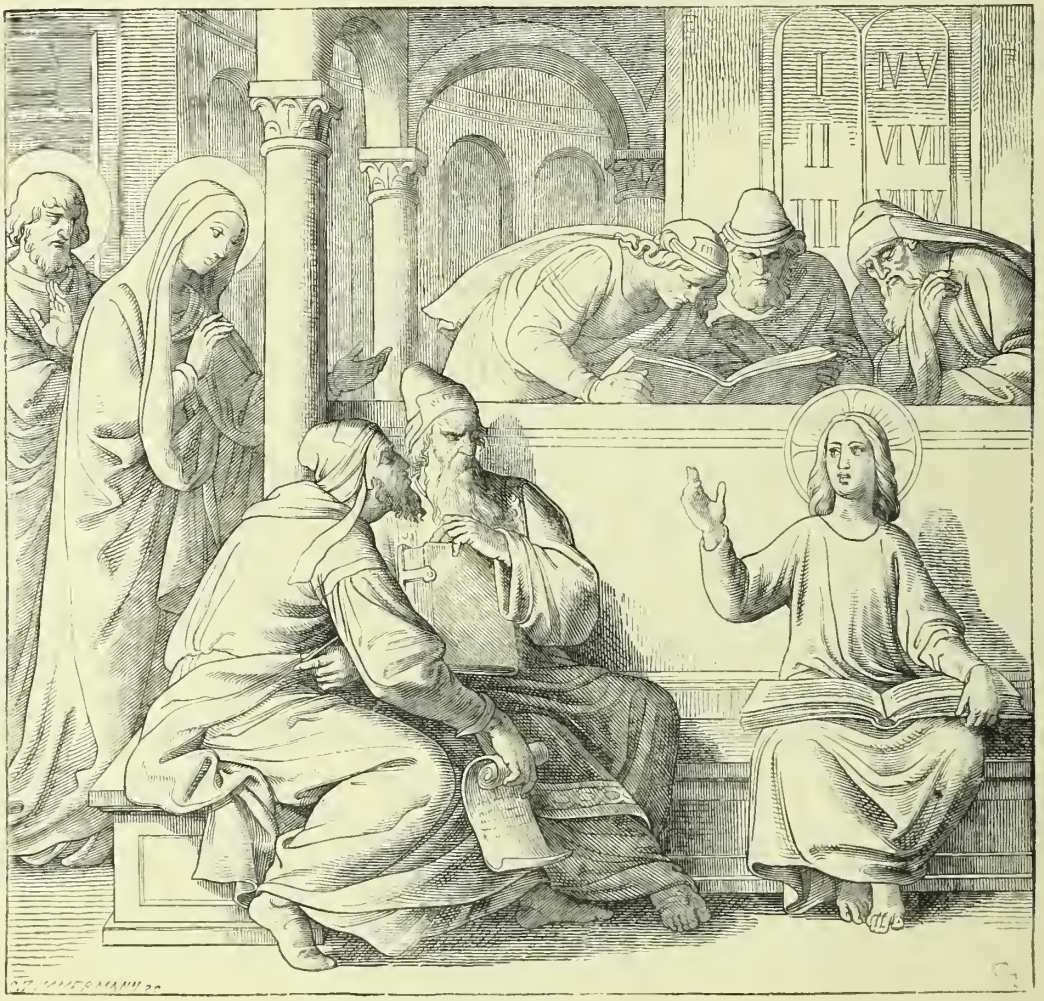
State of our Lord's childhood and private life. His argument with the Jewish doctors. Mission, character, and doctrine of the Baptist. Baptism of Christ, and visible descent of the Spirit on that solemnity.

THE precise circumstances of our Lord's childhood and life, previous to his public ministry, cannot be ascertained from the writings of any of the evangelists, which can alone be relied on as authentic. All we can gather from those inspired men is, that the faculties of his mind were enlarged in proportion to the growth of his body, insomuch that he arrived at the very perfection of heavenly wisdom. As his parents were mean and poor, he had not the advantage of a finished education, and seems to have received no other instruction than what his parents gave him in conformity to the Jewish laws. But supernatural abilities amply compensated for this deficiency, and he gave instances in his earliest years of amazing penetration and consummate wisdom.

According to the Mosaic institution, his parents annually went up to Jerusalem; and when he arrived at the age of twelve years, they carried him there with them, in order that he might early imbibe the precepts of religion and virtue. In this place the holy Jesus tarried without the knowledge, and consequently without the consent, of his parents, who departed with the rest that were going towards Galilee, thinking that he was gone forward with some of their relations or acquaintance: they therefore continued their journey, expecting to overtake him on the road, or to meet him at the place where they had appointed to lodge. But on their arrival, not finding the Child in the village nor amongst their relations, they returned to Jerusalem much troubled; and, after a most anxious search of three days, found him in the temple, sitting among the learned doctors, who were amazed at the wisdom of his questions and the pertinence of his replies, which were so far superior to the utmost they could

expect from one of his tender years and mean education.

These doctors, or expounders of the law among the Jews, always taught the people publicly on the three great festivals; and it was on one of these public occasions that the blessed Jesus gave such manifest proofs of his wisdom and penetration as astonished all beholders, many of whom thought he must be something more than human. As, according to his own declaration, he was employed in his Almighty Father's business, it is natural to think, in the course of these disputes, he modestly corrected



Christ disputing with the Doctors. (*Jäger.*)

some of the errors which the Jewish doctors then taught, and which were repugnant to the plan of that religion which he came to promote and establish. The wonder of his parents at finding him in such sublime employment was beyond expression; though his pious mother, who, notwithstanding the pleasure which the discovery afforded her, could not conceal the concern which his absenting himself without their knowledge had occasioned both to Joseph and herself, addressed him thus: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrow-

ing." To this question he replied, "That their surprise at his absenting himself without their knowledge was groundless and absurd, as they might have been assured from his extraordinary birth, and the wonderful circumstances attending it, that his Father was no less than the Almighty One of Israel; that he assumed human nature to promote his glorious designs, and therefore, as his errand was of such moment, they must not imagine he could always reside with them. How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

The Child Jesus at Nazareth. (William Gale.)

Though his parents did not clearly discern the full meaning of this excellent remonstrance, his pious mother committed his words to memory, and, together with Joseph her husband, joyfully returned with him to their poor dwelling at Nazareth, where he lived with them in dutiful subjection, thereby affording a noble example for the imitation of all children, who certainly are bound to yield obedience to their parents, since the Son of God himself, when on earth, has set them the pattern by practising every

branch of filial duty to his earthly parents.

The blessed Jesus continued in this lowly state for some time, during which he grew both in knowledge and stature; and by his extraordinary qualities, both of body and mind, attracted the regard and admiration of all who either saw or heard him.

Being happily free from those inordinate disquieting desires which disturb and distract mortals, he was always in temper calm and sedate, which, added to a pleasant countenance, combined to prove the strength of his faculties and the goodness of his disposition. He was also an excellent orator, being endowed with a most nervous and persuasive elocution, insomuch that his hearers, frequently astonished at the substance and manner of his address, would suddenly cry out, "Never man spake like this man!" Though considered in his Divine nature he was so superior to his human nature, yet during the time in which he lived thus humbly with his parents he condescended to work with his father at his trade of a carpenter, and thereby left us a shining example of industry.

Thus obscurely, for a time, did the blessed Jesus live, his Divine nature concealed under the veil of humanity; nor did he work any miracles or perform any actions to distinguish him from the rest of mankind until the commencement of his public ministry.

As this is the whole account given in sacred history concerning the childhood and private life of the Saviour of mankind, we must content ourselves therewith, not seeking to indulge a curiosity which such silence seems to forbid as sinful as well as impertinent.

We are fully aware that many persons, of more speculation than piety, may be induced to inquire the cause which prevented the evangelists giving us an exact detail of the transactions of our Saviour's life from the twelfth year of his age till the time of his public ministry, as if every occurrence in this intermediate space ought to have been recorded. To such we reply, that the design of the inspired writers being to instruct, they consulted our interests rather than our humour and caprice; and that therefore the wisdom of God, by whose inspiration they wrote, demands our admiration, in that they passed over less important parts of our Saviour's life, which would have swelled their Gospels to an enormous bulk, fit only for the perusal of the studious, and those persons who have much vacant time; whereas the four Gospels, as they are written, make only a small volume, convenient for carriage, for reading, and for the memory to retain, as well as adapted, by the plainness of their style, to the meanest capacities; notwithstanding which they contain all the important transactions of our Saviour's life, such as those which relate to his mediatorial office, the design of his incarnation, which was to teach us those things which belong to our

eternal peace and happiness; to instruct us in his heavenly doctrines, as our prophet; to offer himself a sacrifice upon the cross, as our priest; and to burst the chains of death, and triumphantly ascend into heaven, as king or head of his church. The omissions, therefore, can be of no real consequence, since "these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name."

During the obscure state of our blessed Redeemer at Nazareth, the Emperor Augustus died in Campania, after a long reign of nearly forty years, to the general regret of the whole Roman empire, and was succeeded by Tiberius, his step-son, a

Elijah and the Young Prophets. (*Strähuber.*)

prince of a very different temper of mind from his predecessor. This emperor, in the second year of his reign, recalled Rufus from the government of Judea, and sent Valerius Gracchus to succeed him. Eleven years afterwards Gracchus was recalled, and succeeded by Pontius Pilate, a person resembling in disposition his master Tiberius, who was malicious, cruel, and covetous.

Soon after Pontius Pilate was appointed to the government of Judea, John the Baptist began to open his commission for preparing our Saviour's way before him, according as was appointed, "The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

Sacred history has not informed us of the manner in which the Baptist spent the former part of his life; but according to ancient tradition, Elizabeth, hearing of Herod's barbarous massacre of the infants of Bethlehem, with all the tenderness of an affectionate mother, fled into the wilderness to secure the infant John, then about eighteen months old, from the relentless cruelty of that inhuman monster, and there, within forty days after, she died.

His aged father, Zacharias, was

The Locust.

afterwards slain while officiating in the temple, by command of the tyrant Herod, for refusing to discover the place of his son's abode. The intended harbinger of the blessed Jesus being thus deprived of his earthly parents, the Father of the fatherless took compassion on him, and sent an angel to defend and support him till he had attained to a sufficient age and strength to provide for himself.

It appears from the narrative of the evangelist that he dwelt in the desert till the time of his public ministry, resembling the ancient prophet Elijah in the coarseness of his clothing and plainness of his diet. His dress was composed of camel's hair, his food the spontaneous productions of the wilderness, such as locusts and wild honey, and his drink pure water. His course of life was, indeed, admirably adapted to the doctrine of repentance which he preached, as well as to engage the attention of his hearers; so that it appears highly reasonable that those who waited the coming of the Messiah with earnest expectation should flock to him, anxious to hear what he had to deliver concerning him.

He proved very successful in his ministry, as he enforced the doctrine of repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand: persons of all degrees and professions flocked to him, confessed their sins, were baptized in Jordan, and submitted to whatever the prophet prescribed as necessary to that kingdom, the approach of which he came to declare. Amongst his converts were many of the Pharisees, who confessed their sins, and were likewise baptized in Jordan.

The conversion of the Pharisees surprised the Baptist, knowing that they maintained a high opinion of their own sanctity, for which reason it was very astonishing that they should express any desire of obtaining a remission of their sins. In short, he was much surprised to find the whole nation so affected by his

threatenings, especially as he knew that they expected salvation on account of their being the seed of Abraham, a conceit which they cherished, and which they seemed to have derived from a misrepresentation of the passage: "Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night; who divideth the sea, when the waves thereof roar: the Lord of Hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the Lord, If the heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off the seed of Israel for all they have done, saith the Lord."

But the Baptist, to curb this arrogance, called them the "offspring of vipers," instead of the "children of Abraham." Perhaps the Pharisees and Sadducees applied to John for baptism, thinking by that means to avoid the danger they might incur from being the avowed enemies of the Messiah, whom they expected to come in all the pomp of royalty, and to maintain his superiority by force of arms.

The Baptist, who was no stranger to these hypocritical sects, and well knew that their applications to him arose from sinister views, severely reprimanded them in general:—"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." O deceivers, hypocrites, whence have you obtained knowledge of the approaching event I am destined by God to make known? Whence have you a sense of the impending judgment of the Almighty? I have plainly told you the only method of avoiding it is by a sincere repentance, which can alone be evinced by the conformity of the heart and life to the word and will of God. "And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Deceive not yourselves with a vain presumption that your lineal descent from Abraham entitles you to eternal blessings: such a pretence will avail you nothing; for to partake of the promises made to that Father of the faithful you must show forth some resemblance of his faith and piety.

The Almighty Creator, who formed our first parent out of the dust, and caused Sarah to bear a son unto Abraham when they were both well stricken in years, can, by virtue of his omnipotence, raise up children unto that faithful patriarch, even from these very stones; children, indeed, who, by the integrity of their hearts and purity of their lives, shall prove their spiritual alliance to Abraham, and share with him the promised salvation.

The Baptist, by this plain but honest declaration, at once set at nought the towering expectations of

this hypocritical tribe, by showing them that God respected the heart alone, and that all their pretences to descent, ceremonies, and other outward parade were of no avail with him who trieth the heart, and searcheth the reins of the children of men. He went further, and assured them that conviction and confession of sin were not sufficient; no, nor even a promise to forsake it; but there must be a speedy and actual putting it into practice. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Delay not this important work, for the judgments of the Almighty are at hand; therefore, if you continue in your sins, impending ruin will certainly fall upon you.

Nothing could be more sincere,

John the Baptist preaching in the Wilderness.

nothing better calculated, than this doctrine of the forerunner of the blessed Jesus: it struck at the very root of the Jewish prejudices, which induced too many of them vainly to rely upon outward rites and ceremonies, with prayers and fastings, which, when not proceeding from a devout heart and a just sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, were an abomination to a holy God. Nor did his conduct less reprove the pride and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees than his doctrine; for whereas that upstart clan used to shun the converse of the publicans and meaner sort of people, and would rarely deign to give them instruction, the humble Baptist received their applications in the most submissive

manner, and preached to them the absolute necessity of faith, repentance, and obedience. Indeed, throughout the whole of his ministration, he happily adapted his discourses to the circumstances and capacities of the various people he addressed, and took every pious means to prepare them for the reception of the promised Messiah, who was shortly to appear amongst them in the glorious character of the Saviour and Redeemer of Israel.

Thus by a life of inflexible virtue, discourses nervous and pathetic, exhortations sincere and fervent, and rebukes honest and courageous, the Baptist became renowned throughout

The Banks of the Jordan. (*H. Warren.*)

the region of Judea. Such was the admiration of the people at his life and doctrine, that from the vision of his father Zacharias in the temple, the arrival of the magi at Jerusalem, the prophecies of Simeon, the discourses of Herod, circumstances recent in their memories, they began to conjecture that John might be the promised Messiah, and were ready to pronounce him the Redeemer of Israel; so that, had he aspired to worldly dignity, he might for a time have shone in all the grandeur of human pomp, and claimed a regard superior to any of the sons of men. But, pious in principle and humble in heart, he could not arrogate

honours of which he was conscious of his unworthiness; and therefore honestly undeceived his credulous followers, by assuring them that, so far from being the glorious person promised, he was only his forerunner; and that such was his own inferiority, that he was unworthy of doing his most menial offices. "But one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." (Luke iii. 16.)

During the time of the Baptist's continuance at Bethabara the blessed Jesus left his retirement at Nazareth, and previous to his public ministry repaired to the banks of the river Jordan, where John was executing his commission from above, in order to be there baptized by him. We cannot impute this conduct of our Lord to any necessity for his conforming to the institution of baptism; for purity needs no cleansing. It is therefore evident that his motive was to add a sanction to that ordinance, for ever after appointed to be the initiating rite of Christianity. "Go, baptize all nations," &c. It appears that John immediately, as it were by a prophetic revelation, knew the Saviour of the world; for we find from the evangelist that he acknowledged his superiority, and declined the office. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Our Lord's answer, though short, is very full and expressive: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." As if he had said, Regard not the precedence at this time, but perform thy office; for it is necessary that we should in the minutest point conform to the Divine will, by which this institution is enjoined. This remonstrance removed the objections of John, and he baptized the immaculate Jesus in the river Jordan, in the presence of numerous spectators.

When the ceremony was performed, as he needed not the instructions usually given on the occasion, he went up straightway out of the water, and kneeling on the bank of the river, fervently addressed his Almighty Father for an abundant effusion of his Holy Spirit, as he was now entering on his public ministry, the prelude of his important mission, the end of which was the salvation of mankind.

His prayer was heard, his request was granted; and an immediate attestation of the Divine pleasure given by a visible ray of glory around him, and an audible voice proceeding from the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, and pronouncing these words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" distinguishing his peculiar approbation of the blessed Jesus by the epithet "beloved," as well as his standing in that relation to him, in a manner nearer than any of the human race, who are called in common the sons of God. This voice resembled not any human sound, but was loud and awful, like the thunders of heaven, in order to strike with reverence the surrounding multitude, and publicly declare the

holy mission of the long-promised Messiah.

The blessed Jesus was called, in the Old Testament, the Son of God, but was on this occasion declared by the Almighty himself to be the long-expected Deliverer of Israel. Thus all who were present at this marvellous descent of the Holy Spirit were amply convinced of the Divine mission of our blessed Lord by an infallible testimony from above, this being the *Star* that was to come out of Jacob, and the *Sceptre* that was to rise out of Israel; the *Shiloh* foretold by the patriarch Jacob; the *Great Prophet* by Moses; the *Holy One* by David; the *Prince of Peace* by Isaiah, and the *Son of Man*. But this remarkable event tended much more to the glory of the Messiah than all those prophecies, as it was, in some measure, a real display of what they could only picture in the dark.

CHAPTER IV.

Commencement of our Saviour's ministry. His temptation in the wilderness. Deputation of the Sanhedrim to John the Baptist. First miracle wrought by the blessed Jesus.

THE great Redeemer, having thus complied with the institution of baptism, and received a most convincing testimony of his heavenly Father's approbation, by the miraculous descent and effusion of the Holy Ghost upon him while praying on the banks of Jordan in the presence of a multitude of spectators, entered on his public ministry at the age of thirty years, according to the custom of the priests among the Jews. It was apprehended by the people that, as he had just begun his public office, he would repair to Jerusalem, the seat of power and grandeur, in order to display to the mighty and the learned his miraculous abilities and effulgent glories. But averse to human parade, the heavenly-minded Jesus preferred solitude to the noise and hurry of mortal life, and therefore retired into the wilderness to prepare himself by fasting, meditation, prayer, and sustaining temptation, for the important work on which he was entering—the salvation of mankind.

To promote this grand design, the evangelist writes that this retirement into the wilderness was in consequence of the immediate direction of the Divine Spirit. Though solitude itself is melancholy, the blessed Jesus added to the dismal scene by retiring to a barren spot, surrounded by high and craggy mountains, forming a dark and gloomy chaos.

In this wild and dreary situation the great Redeemer, as Moses and Elijah had done before him, fasted forty days and forty nights, maintained an incessant communion with his heavenly Father, digested the doctrine he came to deliver, and the obedience he came to perform; and, by a total abstinence from food for forty days and forty nights, evinced the Divinity of his mission, or, in other words, proved that he was a

"teacher come from God." But the melancholy solitude of a desert, and the anxiety of hunger and thirst, were but a small part of our Saviour's sufferings in the wilderness. Satan, that implacable foe to mankind, was permitted to buffet him with the most insinuating wiles, and assail him with the most alluring temptations, in order to attempt the defeat of Heaven's most gracious designs, and keep mankind under the dreadful dominion of sin and death.

The enemies of Revelation have not failed to represent this event in a most ludicrous manner. If any, therefore, should demand why God permitted his only Son, the Saviour of the world, to be tempted by the devil, we reply as follows:—One cause of the Redeemer's being suffered to be tempted was, that he, being personally acquainted with the wiles of Satan, might become a faithful and compassionate high priest, know how to succour his people in

Elijah in the Wilderness.

time of adversity, and pity them when they fall into temptations; that in order to be a shining pattern of every virtue, also a wise and valiant General, the blessed Redeemer underwent all the difficulties and trials attending his service, that we, being animated by his glorious example, might not sink under the pressure and troubles which God, for our good, should be pleased to lay upon us.

The Saviour of the world hath not only been exposed to poverty and ridicule, but also to the most trying temptations of Satan, that as the Captain of our salvation has undergone the same, we ought not to faint when we are tempted, but like him be able to withstand the fiery darts of the devil. It doubtless appears highly proper, in order that our blessed Lord and Master might both enter upon and prosecute his ministry with more glory to himself and advantage to

mankind, that he should previously overcome the most subtle arts of that deceiver who, under the mask of a serpent, seduced our first parents, and involved them and their posterity in one common ruin.

At the expiration of the forty days, when the blessed Jesus had endured the keenest hunger, the tempter, to make proof of the divinity of his mission, insolently demanded why he bore the sensation of hunger, since, if he was the Son of God, he must have power to change even the stones of that dreary wilderness into bread, and by so marvellous a transmutation he might have the satisfaction of knowing the truth of what was said concerning him at his baptism.

But our blessed Saviour repelled this device by citing the words of Moses, which implied that God, whenever it seemed good in his sight, could by extraordinary means provide for the support of the human race: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke iv. 4.)

Satan, being defeated in this effort, carried him to the top of a very high mountain, and, thinking to gain upon his ambition, showed a bright view of all the kingdoms of the world, with their alluring glories, promising him universal empire over them if he would bow down and yield to him the honour of the benefaction.

But observe his accursed pride and arrogance in promising that which is the gift of God alone—universal empire over earth—and requiring what was due to none but the Supreme Object of religious homage. This blasphemy, as well as insolence, incited the holy Jesus to exert his Divine authority, and commanded him, in a peremptory manner, to desist, citing that special injunction from sacred writ, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Though thus repelled, he repeated the attempt; and having carried our Lord through the air, placed him on the pinnacle of a temple, and, by a taunt of insolence, urged him to prove the truth of his mission by casting himself down from thence, citing, as an encouragement for him to comply with his desire, the words of the inspired Psalmist, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Matt. iv. 6.) But our Saviour soon baffled this attempt by another apt quotation from Scripture, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Matt. iv. 7.) Thou shalt not provoke the Lord, either by disobeying his command, or by an impertinent curiosity to know more concerning his mind and will than he is pleased to reveal. Thus baffled in all his art and devices by the wisdom and power of the Son of God, he departed from him for a season, and a host of celestial spirits, despatched from the regions of bliss, came and ministered refreshment unto him after his victory

The Temptation of Christ

over the great enemy and deceiver of mankind.

Hence, as before observed, notwithstanding the ridicule of the infidel, Christians may derive great encouragement to fight manfully against the flesh, the world, and the devil, under the banner of the great Captain of our salvation, who is ever ready to supply them with spiritual armour, to sustain the combat with that inveterate and subtle foe whose devices he has experienced, being in every respect tempted like them.

During the time of our Saviour's retirement in the wilderness, his faithful harbinger, the Baptist, being assured, from the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit and other concurring testimonies, that Jesus was the promised and long-expected Messiah, continued publishing his mission to the multitude; so that the rulers in Jerusalem received information of the surprising events that had happened in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, before they saw the blessed Jesus, in confirmation of whose mission and doctrine they were effected. Prompted by curiosity, they despatched a deputation of priests and Levites to the Baptist, to demand of him whether he was the Messiah, or Elias, or that prophet who was to rise from the dead, and precede the Messiah, the powerful Prince so earnestly expected by the whole nation of Israel. To this inquiry the Baptist frankly replied, that he was not the Messiah whom they expected, nor Elias, who, as they vainly thought, would personally appear amongst them, nor any other prophet risen from the dead; but at the same time hinted to them that though he was not Elias himself, yet he was that prophet spoken of by Isaiah, and of whom he thus prophesied: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isaiah xl. 3.)

The priests and Levites, not sufficiently gratified with this reply of the Baptist, demanded of him why he assumed the power of baptizing the people, if he was neither the Messiah nor Elias, nor any of the ancient prophets risen from the dead. To this demand John answered, "I indeed baptize to show the necessity of repentance, but my baptism is only that of water, and wholly ineffectual in itself to the remission of sins; whereas that washing foretold by Zacharias, which is of most sovereign effect, is not my province, but solely that of the Messiah, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to unloose, and who is actually upon earth, and among ye, though ye know him not, because he hath not manifested himself unto the world."

The day after the departure of the priests and Levites from Bethabara our blessed Lord left the wilderness, and repaired thither himself, while John was yet baptizing and preaching the doctrine of repentance.

The Baptist, as his grand business was to direct all persons to the Messiah for life and salvation in and

through him, embraced this seasonable opportunity of pointing him out to the multitude: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Lest the attending crowd should surmise that it had been previously concerted between them that the Saviour should assume and the latter give him the appellation of Messiah, he publicly and solemnly declared that he was ignorant of the pretensions of Jesus to that high character until he saw the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost, and heard him pronounced in the most awful manner the Son of God. "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." (John i. 32, &c.)

The Baptist having made this public declaration, the Messiah left Bethabara, but returned the day following, and John, happening to stand with two of his followers on the bank of the river Jordan, pointed to him as he passed, and in a pious rapture repeated what he had addressed to the multitude the preceding day: "Behold the Lamb of God." It is hence imagined that these two disciples or followers of the Baptist were absent at the time of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and for that reason this method was taken of pointing out to them the person of the promised Redeemer. Animated with an ardent desire of hearing, as well as seeing, this extraordinary person, they left John, and followed Jesus, who, conscious of their design, turned about, and with the utmost affability gave them an invitation to the place of his residence.

The evangelist John informs us that one of these disciples was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter; and it is conjectured, from his silence, that himself was the other; for it is remarkable that in his writings he has studiously concealed his own name. Be that as it may, it is abundantly evident that the testimony of the Baptist, added to the tokens he had from the ever-blessed Jesus in the course of his converse with him, amply satisfied Andrew that he was indeed the promised Messiah, the Saviour and Redeemer of a lost and perishing world.

Andrew soon after found his brother Peter, and brought him to our Lord, who immediately called him by his name, telling him that he should afterwards be called Cephas, which signifies a rock, from his firm resolution of mind, and also because he should contribute towards the foundation of the Christian church.

Some time after, Jesus casually met with Philip, an inhabitant of the town of Bethsaida, and said to him, "Follow me." Philip immediately obeyed the Divine command, having heard of the character and

mission of our blessed Saviour. It is supposed that this disciple was present at the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit on our Lord at his baptism, and that therefore his ready compliance with his call is no matter of admiration.

Philip meeting with Nathanael, an inhabitant of Cana, a town of Galilee, informed him of the actual coming of the long-expected Messiah, that great Deliverer of Israel spoken of by Moses and the ancient prophets: "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael was assured, from the predictions concerning the Messiah, that he was to be descended from the line of David, and born in the city of Bethlehem, and therefore discovered an amazement at his being called Jesus of Nazareth: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Can that most contemptible of places, Nazareth, be supposed to have given birth to the mighty Saviour, the Prince of Peace, especially as it was expressly foretold by the prophet that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the city of David?"

Notwithstanding the improbability of such an event, Nathanael determined on an examination of the person who was said by Philip to be the promised Messiah. Accordingly, under his direction, he repaired to the blessed Jesus, who, knowing his character, saluted him on his approach with this honourable appellation, "An Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

Nathanael, amazed at our Lord's pertinent address, as he had never before seen him, asked by what means he obtained such precise knowledge of him. Our Lord replied, he had seen him under the fig-tree.

Probably Nathanael had been praying under the fig-tree, and been overheard by our Lord, who, from the substance of his prayer, thus concluded his character; for when Jesus informed him that he gave him that character on account of what had passed under the fig-tree, Nathanael perceived that he knew not only what passed at a distance, but had access to the inmost thoughts of the heart—a property not allotted to mortals; and therefore exclaimed with rapture, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Our Saviour then told him he should hereafter have much stronger testimonials of the divinity of his mission, when he should be eye-witness to what the old patriarch Jacob had before seen in a vision—the angels of heaven "descending and ascending" to attend the person and execute the commands of the "Son of Man;" an appellation our dear Lord assumed not only as considering his humanity, but in order to fulfil most peremptorily that remarkable prediction of the prophet Daniel concerning him, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve

him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Daniel vii. 13, 14.)

The great Redeemer, having attested the divinity of his mission by many incontestable evidences, and made five disciples, departed for Galilee, where, soon after his arrival, he was invited, with his mother and disciples, to a marriage feast at Cana, a place near Nazareth.

At these nuptials there happened to be a scarcity of wine, and his mother, who interested herself in the conduct of the feast, and was therefore desirous that everything should be done with decorum, applied to him, hoping that he should be able to remedy the defect. She had,

Jacob's Vision. (*A. Strähuber.*)

doubtless, been eye-witness to his power of working miracles, and was therefore desirous that he would give proof of his ability in the presence of her friends who were assembled at the marriage. Therefore, addressing herself to her Son, she represented to him that they had no wine. Our Lord gently reproved her in these words: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come;" that is, the time or period of my public ministry is not yet arrived, nor is it time yet for me to display my supernatural powers.

Notwithstanding this mild reproof, his mother still entertained an opinion that he would interest himself in be-

The Marriage at Cana

half of her and the company, and therefore ordered the servants punctually to obey his commands.

Our blessed Lord, being assured that the exertion of his Divine power in working a miracle would greatly tend to confirm the faith of his young disciples, ordered the servants to fill six water-pots, containing each about twenty gallons, with water, which was no sooner done than the whole was converted into excellent wine. He then desired them to draw, and bear to the governor of the feast, who, being ignorant of the miracle that had been wrought, and astonished

The Marriage Feast at Cana. (*Tintoretto.*)

at the preference of this wine to that which had been served up at the beginning of the feast, addressed himself to the bridegroom in the hearing of the whole company, telling him that, contrary to the usual custom, he had reserved the best wine to the last; at the same time commending so judicious a practice, as a plain proof of his approbation of his friends present at the entertainment. The bridegroom was equally surprised at the address of the governor of the feast, and the occasion of it, which was effected by the supernatural power of our blessed Lord.

This miracle, which was the first wrought by Jesus, confirmed the faith of his followers, and spread his renown through the adjacent country.

The votaries of infidelity have not failed to arraign the truth of this event at the bar of their superior reason, and to vent their sarcastic humour upon it.

Their mirth and ridicule seem chiefly founded on a supposition that most of the company were intoxicated, and consequently more liable to delusion; but we desire them to suspend their opinion, or at least their judgment, a little, while we remind them that the governor, in his speech to the bridegroom, does not imply even such a supposition, but evidently refers to the manner in which the entertainment was conducted—a manner much preferable to that customarily followed, in which "every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." Nor can these wise people in their own conceit rationally think that Jesus ordered or expected that all the wine he had furnished should be expended at this entertainment, though, according to the Jewish custom on these occasions, it continued a week.

Permit us also to observe that there might be a very important reason assigned for our Lord's furnishing such abundance, because, if the quantity had been considerably less, the miracle would have been much less apparent, and the enemies of Christianity, ever ready to grasp at the shadow of a pretence, might have denied that a miracle was wrought at all, it having been easy to convey away a small quantity of water and substitute the like quantity of wine in its place; whereas such a deception must be allowed impracticable in so large a quantity, the transmutation being momentary.

The deists have likewise made much parade of argument concerning the size of these water-pots. In this we give them their utmost scope, persuaded that all which they can say on that head will not in the least tend to invalidate the Christian cause.

The blessed Jesus having thus, by divers means, confirmed the faith of his disciples, and attested the truth and the divinity of his mission amongst those with whom he had been brought up, departed from Cana, and proceeded towards Jerusalem, in order to keep the approaching Passover.

CHAPTER V.

Expulsion of the profaners of the temple. Jesus visits and disputes with Nicodemus. Baptizes in Judea. Instructs a poor Samaritan. Heals a sick person at Capernaum. Retires again to Nazareth, and is expelled thence by his impious countrymen.

OUR blessed Lord, immediately on his arrival at Jerusalem, repaired to the temple, where he was shocked at beholding a place dedicated to the solemn service of Almighty God prostituted to purposes of fraud and avarice, and become the resort of traders of every kind. Such abuse could not long escape his notice and correction, having an absolute right to chastise so flagrant a perversion of a place that, strictly speaking, was his own. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." Accordingly, the blessed Jesus, whose pious soul was vexed at their profanation of the sacred place, drove out the traders, and overset the tables of the money-changers, saying unto them that sold doves, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

These mercenary wretches appear

Doves.

to have been struck at once with a consciousness of their guilt and the severity of our Lord's reproof, as they immediately departed without making the least resistance.

But our Lord's conduct in this affair carrying with it every token of zeal, for which the ancient prophets were so remarkable, the council assembled, and determined to inquire by what authority he attempted such a reformation, requiring at the same time a demonstrative proof of the divinity of his commission. To gratify their curiosity, our blessed Lord referred them only to the miracle of his own resurrection: "Destroy," says he, laying his hand on his breast, "this temple, and I will raise it up in three days." The rulers, mistaking his meaning, imagined that he referred to the superb and lofty temple finished by Herod, and therefore told him such a relation was highly improbable; nor had they the least reason to think he could possibly rebuild in three days that magnificent structure, which had been finished at immense expense, and was the labour of forty and six years.

Though the blessed Jesus declined compliance with the request of the mighty and noble amongst the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he wrought several miracles in the presence of the common people, in order to confirm the doctrines he delivered, and prove the divinity of his mission. As no miracles had been wrought amongst them for a considerable time, though many were recorded in their sacred books, they beheld our blessed Lord with amazement and veneration; and numbers were satisfied that he was the long-promised Messiah, the desired of all nations, so often foretold by the ancient prophets. For wise reasons, however, he did not publicly discover that he was the Great Prophet, as he knew that the faith of numbers was yet but weak, and that consequently many would desert his cause when they found he was opposed by the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, and did not set up a worldly kingdom, as they thought the expected Messiah was to do. But the miracles wrought by the holy Jesus did not excite the wonder and astonishment of the common and illiterate class of the people alone. Nicodemus, a principal person among them, on impartial reflection upon his wondrous works, so astonishing in their nature, so demonstrative in their proof, so salutary in their effect, so happily adapted to the confirmation of his doctrines, and so perfectly agreeable to the attributes of Deity, as well as the predictions of the ancient prophets concerning the Messiah, the Sun of Righteousness, who was to rise with healing in his wings, was perfectly assured that nothing less than Omnipotence itself could produce such wonders; and thence, like many others of his countrymen, concluded that Jesus was of a truth the *Son*, and *sent of God*, which last term is the meaning of the word Messiah. But scruples still arose in his mind when, on the other hand, he considered the obscurity of his birth and the meanness of his appearance; so different from the

exalted notions the people of the Jews always entertained concerning this powerful Prince, who was to erect his throne in the mighty city of Jerusalem, and subject to his dominion all the states and kingdoms of the earth. To remove, therefore, these scruples, and solve these perplexing doubts, Nicodemus resolved on an interview with the blessed Jesus; but desiring to conceal his visit from the other members of the Sanhedrim, who were greatly averse to his person and doctrine, he chose the night as most convenient for that purpose.

His salutation of the mighty Redeemer of Israel was this: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these things that thou doest, except God be with him." (John iii. 2.) Rabbi, I am sufficiently convinced that thou art immediately sent as a teacher from on high; for nothing less than power Divine could enable thee to perform the miracles thou hast wrought in the presence of multitudes. But this salutation by no means implies that Nicodemus thought Jesus the great promised Messiah, even the Redeemer of Israel; nor could he obtain that knowledge till it was revealed to him by the blessed Spirit of God.

We may observe that our Saviour, waiving all formality and circumlocution, which tend to no real profit, immediately preaches to this disguised rabbi the first great doctrine of Christianity, regeneration: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus, I declare unto thee, as a truth of the last importance—verily, verily, unless a man be regenerated in the spirit of his mind, have his will and affections transferred from earthly to spiritual objects, he cannot see the kingdom of God, which is holy and spiritual in its nature and enjoyments.

This was a mysterious system to

Jewish Rabbi.

the rabbi, whose religious views extended no further than rites and ceremonies, and were bounded by time and space; besides, he thought the very position of our Lord an absurdity in terms. "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Our Lord replies to this question, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot

enter into the kingdom of God." The regeneration which I preach unto you is not of a natural, but of a spiritual nature: unless a man embraces the Christian religion and doctrines, whose initiating ordinance is baptism, and becomes the subject of Divine grace, he cannot be the subject of Divine glory, which consists not in earthly splendour, and the gratifications of the meaner passions, but in an exemption from whatever is earthly, sensual, and unholy, and the prosecution of whatever is heavenly, holy, and spiritual. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Wonder not at my doctrine of regeneration, which is designed to inform you that you derive no excellence from your boasted descent from Abraham,—as such you are merely earthly, subject to sins and infirmities of every kind,—as well as to show that you must undergo a spiritual and mental regeneration, a renovation of the heart, which changes the whole man, and fits the recipient for the participation of heavenly blessedness.

This important work is likewise spiritual in its operation, unseen by mortal eyes, being wrought on the mind or heart of man by the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, which change his nature; and, with respect to eternal things, make him another, a new creature. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Notwithstanding this explanation of the blessed Jesus, Nicodemus was so prepossessed with partiality towards the Jews, who, on account of their alliance to Abraham, thought they were the people of God, entitled to heaven, and consequently in no need of this new operation of the mind, called regeneration, that he again demanded, "How can these things be?" The Divine Instructor then reproves his dulness and misapprehension of what he had so clearly explained and propounded to him, especially as he was himself a teacher of the people, and one of the great council of the nation. "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" The doctrines I deliver are not fiction and mere surmise, but founded on eternal truth, immediately revealed from God, and consistent with the will of heaven. I am witness to the same, and therefore affirm that such testimony is sufficient to render them valid. But your prejudices still prevail, nor can your unbelief be conquered by all the arguments I can advance. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." If ye thus reject the first principles of the Christian religion, such as the necessity of regeneration, or the influence of the Spirit of God upon the heart of man, how will ye believe the sublimer truths I shall hereafter deliver con-

cerning the kingdom of God, or state of the saints in glory? If I inform you of spiritual transactions in this lower world, and ye believe not, how

Moses delivering the Law. (*F. Franklin.*)

can ye believe if I tell you of those things which relate solely to another and a heavenly state? But to confirm your belief in what I have delivered,

know that my assured knowledge of these things is derived from the Father of Light, the God of Truth, by whom I am vested with gifts as superior to any of the ancient prophets as Deity exceeds humanity.

No man hath ascended the regions of immortality but he who descended from thence, even "the Son of man;" consequently no man but the Son of man can, with truth and certainty, reveal the immediate will of the Father who is in heaven. Your great law-giver, Moses, ascended not there—Mount Sinai was the summit of his elevation; whereas the Son of man, who was in heaven, and came down from thence with a Divine commission to sinful mortals, had the most clear and convincing proofs of the will of his Almighty Father, penetrated into the designs of infinite wisdom and grace, and consequently must be higher than any preceding prophet, being in a peculiar sense the prophet of the Most High God, or angel of the presence. This Divine Preacher, who spoke as no man ever spake, likewise laboured to eradicate the favourite principle of the Jews—I mean that of confining all blessings, temporal and eternal, to their own nation and people—as well as to show the vanity of their expecting the appearance of the Messiah in pomp and magnificence.

To effect this glorious design he lays open to the rabbi that it was agreeable both to the doctrines of Moses, as well as the will of God, that the Redeemer, in this state of mortality, should be exposed to poverty and distress of every kind; that his conquests were not to be of a temporal nature, over the hearts and wills of mankind; that his throne was not to be established in the earthly, but the heavenly Jerusalem, previous to which he was to shed his blood, as, by virtue of the same, all (of every nation and kingdom throughout the earth) might pass into the heavenly world, and there for ever reign with him, provided they relied on his merits, and conformed their lives to the doctrines he preached.

This is the sum and substance of Christianity; this is the sum and substance of what our blessed Lord preached to Nicodemus, that great ruler and teacher of the Jews—a sermon comprehending the whole that need be taught, notwithstanding religion is at this day rent to pieces by sectaries, each of whom broaches some new-fangled doctrine, suggested by ignorance or presumption, or both united.

That God Almighty, the Father, out of his unsupplicated, unmerited grace and mercy to the sinful race of men, sent his only-begotten Son to purchase eternal life through the effusion of his own blood, for all of every nation and kingdom throughout the earth who should believe in the divinity of his mission and the efficacy of his atonement, and, in consequence of that faith, conform, as far as the infirmities of sinful nature will permit, to the rules of his gospel. "Only let your conversation be as

becometh the gospel of Christ." Condemnation, justly passed on all transgressors of the law of God (which are all mankind), can alone be averted, according to the Divine institution, the propriety of which it is the height of impiety and presumption to call in question, by faith in the blessed Jesus—such a faith as we have just explained. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

It appears from the future conduct of Nicodemus that he now fully believed that Jesus was not merely, as he at first supposed, a teacher come from God, but the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel; for he afterwards constantly espoused his cause in the great council of the nation; and when his countrymen put him to an ignominious death, he, together with Joseph of Arimathea, conveyed him to burial, when all others had forsaken him.

The time of the Passover at Jerusalem being expired, Jesus, together with his disciples, withdrew into the remote parts of Judea, where he continued a considerable time, preaching the kingdom of God, and baptizing the new converts.

John the Baptist being also at the same time baptizing in the river Enon, a dispute arose between his disciples and certain Jews concerning the preference of the baptism of Jesus. Being unable to decide the point, they referred it to the opinion of John, on which the pious Baptist immediately declared that he was only the harbinger of the great Messiah, who baptized not only with water, but with the Holy Spirit; adding that his own ministry was on the decline, as the beauty of the morning-star, the harbinger of the sun, decreases when that fountain of light but dawns in the chambers of the east.

The Baptist likewise mentioned to his disciples and hearers many circumstances tending to prove the divinity of the mission of the Holy Jesus, and the important design of his incarnation. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: but he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The Baptist, after having publicly preached the great doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus, departed from the wilderness of Judea, where he had continued a considerable time, and went into Galilee, often repairing to the court of Herod, who esteemed, or affected to esteem, both his preaching and person. But John, being faithful in his ministry, could not fail to remonstrate on the impiety and injustice of a known practice of Herod—his cohabiting with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; and thereby incurring the displeasure of that ambitious woman, he was, at her instance, cast into prison, there to be reserved for future destruction.

Whilst these things happened in

Galilee, our blessed Lord continued preaching in the wilderness, whither great numbers resorted, attracted by curiosity, to see the great miracles which fame reported he daily wrought. The success of his ministry exciting the envy of the hypocritical tribe of Pharisees, our blessed Lord thought proper to retire into Galilee, in order to promote the design of his mission in those parts. In the course of his journey, being athirst and weary with travelling in so warm a country, he sat down in Samaria by a celebrated well, given by the old patriarch Jacob to his son Joseph, while his disciples were gone to the city to procure provisions.

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria.

While the humble Jesus sat by the well-side, a woman, a native of the country, came with her pitcher to fetch water, and our Lord requested of her to give him to drink.

This application of Jesus astonished the woman, because she knew him to be a Jew, and the Samaritans were held in the utmost contempt by those people, who, indeed, arrogated a preference to all nations upon earth. But though she knew him to be a Jew, she knew not that he was the Son of God, full of grace and truth, divested of human prejudices, and the very essence of humility and every virtue. As the design of his incarnation was to promote the real happiness of mankind, he embraced every opportunity of enforcing his salutary doctrines, and therefore, though his thirst was extreme, he delayed its gratification in order to inform this woman, though of an infamous character, of the means by which she might obtain living water, or, in other words, eternal life. As the best method to effect this purpose, he gave her to understand that, had she known the character of the supplicant, she would have eagerly satisfied his desire, and been retaliated by a gift the most invaluable, even living water, issuing from the well of eternal salvation.

The woman, taking his words in the common acceptation, imagining that he suggested his power of supplying her with water flowing from a perpetual spring, which in that parched climate appeared impossible, demanded of him if he was vested with a power superior to their father Jacob, who dug this well, drank out of it with his family, and left it for the benefit of posterity.

The Saviour and friend of man-

Jesus and the Samaritan

kind, still benign in his purpose towards this poor wretch, replied, That all who drank of the water of Jacob's well would thirst again, being but a temporary allay of a desire incident to human nature; whereas those who drank of the water which he was ready to dispense should never thirst, because that water flowed from the inexhaustible fountain of Divine grace, and could not be drained but with immensity itself.

Though this great Preacher of Israel, by a simple and natural allegory, displayed the power of Divine grace, the woman, blind to the allusion, endeavoured to turn his pious and benevolent discourse to ridicule, desiring the gift of that living water which would for ever prevent her from thirsting for the future. To show her the malignity of her presumption in turning into contempt the discourse of him who had the words

Jerusalem: Pool of Hezekiah.

of eternal life, the blessed Jesus, by some pertinent questions and replies, evinced his knowledge of her infamous course of life, and by that means convinced her that he acted under an influence more than human.

To evade, however, the present subject of discourse, which filled her with a degree of awe and fear, she proposed to his discussion a case long warmly contested between the Jews and Samaritans — whether Mount Gerizim, or the city of Jerusalem, was destined by God as the place peculiarly set apart for religious worship. Our blessed Lord replied to this evasive as well as insignificant question, that it was not the place, but the manner in which adoration was offered to the Father of spirits, that rendered such worship acceptable; observing that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 24.)

In consequence of this reply to

her referring to things spiritual and eternal, she informed the blessed Jesus of her expectation of the arrival of the promised Messiah, who should punctually inform them concerning these points so long and undecisively contested. Our Lord, embracing the opportunity of preaching himself to this poor woman as the Saviour of sinners, replied, without hesitation, "I that speak unto thee am he."

While Jesus continued talking with the woman his disciples returned, and approached him at the very time when he told the woman that he was the Messiah. Though they were astonished at his condescension in conversing with an inhabitant of Samaria, and even of instructing her in the doctrines of religion, none presumed to ask him why he conversed with one who was an enemy to the Jews and the worship in the temple at Jerusalem. But the woman, hearing Jesus call himself the Messiah, left her pitcher, and ran into the city to publish the glad tidings that the great Deliverer of mankind was then sitting by the well of Jacob, and had told her all the secret transactions of her life. This report astonished the Samaritans, and, at the same time, roused their curiosity to see a person foretold by Moses and the prophets, and of whose appearance there was then so universal an expectation.

The disciples, on their return, set before their Master the provision they had purchased; but he, wholly absorbed in meditation, refused the refreshment so highly requisite, telling them he had "meat to eat that they knew nothing of."

This unexpected answer surprised his disciples, who, understanding his words in their natural sense, asked one another whether any person had, during their absence, supplied him with provisions.

But Jesus soon explained the mystery by telling them that he did not mean natural, but spiritual food; that to execute the commission he had received from his Father was far better than meat or drink, and the satisfaction he was going to receive from the conversion of the Samaritans much greater than any sensual enjoyment.

Many of the Samaritans were now near Jesus, when, lifting up his eyes, and seeing the ways crowded with people coming to him from the city, he stretched out his benevolent hand towards them, and addressed his disciples in the following manner:— "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." (John iv. 35.) Behold yonder multitudes, how they are thronging to hear the word, which has only a few minutes been sown in their hearts! It is not, therefore, always necessary to wait with patience for the effect; for it sometimes immediately follows the cause. To gather this spiritual harvest, and finish the work of him that sent me, is my proper food; adding, for the encouragement of his disciples,

as you have laboured with me in the harvest of souls, so shall you participate in the great recompense of eternal reward: "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." (John iv. 36.)

Several among this company had been so affected at the words of the woman, that they were fully persuaded that Jesus could be no other than the great Messiah. Accordingly, their first request was that he would deign to take up his residence in their city; and the compassionate Redeemer of the human race so far complied as to stay with them two days, an interval which he spent in preaching to them the kingdom of God, so that the greatest part of the city embraced the doctrine of the gospel, and, at his departure, said unto the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." (John iv. 42.)

Having accomplished his gracious design in Samaria, Jesus continued his journey to Galilee, to exercise his ministry, and preach there the kingdom of God, telling his disciples that the time was now accomplished which had been predetermined by Omnipotence for erecting the happy kingdom of the Prince of Peace, and therefore the Mosaic ceremonies were no longer obligatory, righteousness alone being now required from the children of men.

Our Lord had performed several miracles at Jerusalem during the Passover, at which the inhabitants of Galilee were present. His preaching was, therefore, at first, attended with great success, for they listened attentively to his doctrine, and received it with great kindness and courtesy, especially the people of Cana, where he had turned the water into wine.

During his residence in that city a nobleman of Capernaum came to him, requesting, with great humility and reverence, that he would come down and heal his son, who was at the point of death. Our blessed Saviour readily complied with the latter part of his request; but to remove a prejudice they had conceived, that it was necessary to be personally present in order to restore the sick person to health, refused to go down to Capernaum, dismissing the father with this assurance that his son was restored to health: "Go thy way; thy son liveth." (John iv. 50.)

The nobleman obeyed the word of Jesus, and immediately departed for his own house; but before his arrival he was met by his servants with the joyful news that his son was recovered. Upon this the father inquired at what time they perceived an alteration for the better, and from their answer was satisfied that immediately after the words were spoken by the blessed Jesus the fever left him, and he was recovered in a miraculous manner.

This amazing instance of his power and goodness abundantly convinced the nobleman and his family that

Jesus was the true Messiah, the great Prophet so long promised to the world.

After some stay in the city and neighbourhood of Cana, Jesus went to Nazareth, where he spent the greatest part of his youth, and, as his constant custom was, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and read that celebrated prediction of the Messiah in the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke iv. 18, 19.)

It should be remembered that our blessed Saviour read this passage in the original Hebrew, which was then a dead language; and, as he had never been taught letters, could do it only by inspiration from above. But he did more; he explained the passage with such strength of reason and beauty of expression, that the inhabitants of Nazareth, who well knew he had never been initiated into the rudiments of learning, heard him with astonishment. But, as he had performed no miracle in their city, they were offended at him. Perhaps they thought the place of his residence should have been his peculiar care; and, as he could with a single word heal the sick at a distance, not a single person in Nazareth should have been afflicted with any kind of disease.

That they really entertained sentiments of this kind seems plain from our Saviour's own words: "Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself: whatever ye have done in Capernaum, do also here in thy own country;" evidently alluding to the great and benevolent miracle he had wrought on the nobleman's son.

But the holy Jesus, enumerating the miracles Elijah had done in behalf of the widow of Sarepta, who was a heathen, and the inhabitant of an idolatrous city, in the time of famine, when many widows in Israel perished with hunger; and of Naaman the Syrian, who was cured of his leprosy by the prophet Elisha, when numbers of Jews, afflicted with the same loathsome disease, were suffered to continue in their uncleanness, sufficiently proved that the prophets had on some extraordinary occasions wrought miracles in favour of those whom the Israelites judged unworthy of such marks of particular favour.

The council were so incensed at this reply that, forgetting the sanctity of the Sabbath, they hurried him through the streets "to the brow of the hill whereon the city was built," intending to cast him headlong down the precipice; but the Son of God defeated their cruel intentions by rendering himself invisible, and thus withdrawing from their fury.

CHAPTER VI.

Our Lord proceeds to Capernaum. Adds to the number of his followers. Proclaims the gospel in Galilee. Preaches to a numerous audience his well-known and excellent discourse upon the Mount.

THE holy Jesus, aggrieved by the cruel Nazarenes, departed from them, and fixed his habitation in Capernaum, the capital of Galilee, which, from being built on the borders of the Lake of Genesareth, was a place highly convenient for his designs; for, besides the numerous inhabitants of that city, the trading towns on the lake were crowded with strangers, who, after hearing the doctrine of the gospel preached by the great Redeemer of mankind, would not fail to spread in their respective countries the happy tidings of salvation.

Though it was expedient that he should spend a considerable time in preaching and working miracles to confirm his mission, and instruct his disciples in the doctrine they were afterwards to publish to the whole world, this could not be done at Jerusalem, the residence of the scribes and Pharisees, whose ambition would never have suffered so celebrated a teacher as Jesus to reside among them: these countries were therefore the only places where he could for any time take up his residence, and instruct the people in such a manner as to answer the great intention of his coming into the world.

If any should inquire why he preferred Capernaum to all the other places situated on the Lake of Genesareth, we reply, he was certain of being favourably received by the inhabitants of that city. He had gained the friendship of the principal family by restoring to health a favourite child, who, to all human appearance, was just stepping into the chambers of the grave. Nor was this family the only friends he had in that city: so stupendous a miracle could not fail of procuring the love and esteem of all the relations of that noble family. Besides, so benevolent and surprising a miracle must have conciliated the respect of all the inha-

bitants of Capernaum, who could not be ignorant of so remarkable an event; and accordingly our Saviour spent here, and in other places bordering on the lake, two or three years of his public life, so that the inhabitants of these parts enjoyed a considerable share of the blessed company and Divine instructions of the Son of God.

It may not be amiss here to give a short description of this celebrated lake, called, in the Old Testament, the Sea of Chinnereth; but in the New it has three different appellations, being called the Sea of Galilee, from the province of Galilee in general; the Sea of Tiberias, from a city of that name on its western shore; and the Lake of Genesareth, from a particular tract of Galilee extending a considerable way along its western side.

According to Josephus, it is an hundred furlongs in length, and forty in breadth. The bottom is of gravel, which renders the water both of a good colour and taste; it is softer than either fountain or river water, and at the same time so cold that it will not grow warm, though exposed to the rays of the sun in the very hottest season of the year. The river Jordan runs through the midst of it, which stocks it with a great variety of fish of a peculiar form and flavour, not found in any other place.

The countries surrounding this lake were large, fertile, and populous, especially the two Galilees, which, according to Josephus, had a great many towns and a multitude of villages, the least of which contained fifteen hundred souls. On the east side were the cities of Chorasin, Bethsaida, Gadara, and Hippon; on the west, Capernaum, Tiberias, and Tarichea. And from all these advantages it was a common saying among the Jews, that God loved the Sea of Galilee above all other seas—an observation strictly just, if to these we add its greatest advantage, namely, that this sea, above all others, was frequently honoured with the Divine presence of the great Redeemer of mankind while he dwelt at Capernaum, and even once after he arose from the dead.

While Jesus tarried at Capernaum he usually taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath-day, preaching with such energy of power as greatly astonished the whole congregation. He did not, however, constantly confine himself to that city; the adjacent country was often blessed with his presence, and cheered with the heavenly words of his mouth.

In one of the neighbouring villages he called Simon and Andrew, who were following their occupation of fishing on the lake, to accompany him. These disciples, who had before been acquainted with him, readily obeyed the heavenly mandate, and followed the Saviour of the world. Soon after he saw James and John, who were also fishing on the lake, and called them also. Nor did they hesitate to follow the great Redeemer of mankind; and from their ready compliance there is reason to believe

that they, as well as Simon and Andrew, were acquainted with Jesus at Jordan, unless we suppose, which is far from being improbable, that their readiness proceeded from the secret energy of his power upon their minds. But however this may be, the four disciples accompanied our blessed Saviour to Capernaum, and soon after to different parts of Galilee.

How long our Lord was on this journey cannot be determined. All the evangelists have mentioned is, that he wrought a great number of miracles on diseased persons, and that the fame of these wonderful works drew people from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Nor was the knowledge of these miracles concealed from the heathens, particularly the inhabitants of Syria; for they also brought their sick to Galilee to be healed by him. Consequently the time our blessed Saviour spent in these tours must have been considerable, though the evangelists have said very little concerning it.

But whatever time was spent in these benevolent actions, the vast multitudes which flocked to him from every quarter moved his compassion towards those who were bewildered in the darkness of ignorance, and determined him to preach to them "the words of eternal life."

For that gracious purpose he ascended a mountain in the neighbourhood, and placing himself on an eminence, from whence he could be heard by the throngs of people attending him, he inculcated, in an amazingly pathetic manner, the most important points of religion. But alas! they were coldly received, because many of them were directly opposite to the standing precepts delivered by the scribes and Pharisees. Surely these people, who had seen the blessed Jesus perform so many benevolent actions to the poor, the diseased, and the maimed, might have entertained a more favourable opinion of his doctrine, and known that so compassionate and powerful a person must have been actuated by the Spirit of God, and, consequently, that the doctrine he taught was really Divine. He opened his excellent sermon with the doctrine of happiness —a subject which the teachers of wisdom have always considered as the principal object in morals, and employed their utmost abilities to convey a clear idea of it to their disciples, but differed very remarkably with regard to the particulars in which it consisted. The Jews were, in general, persuaded that the enjoyments of sense were the sovereign good. Riches, conquest, liberty, mirth, women, fame, revenge, and other things of the same kind, afforded them such pleasures, that they wished for no better in the Messiah's kingdom, which they all considered as a secular one, and that a golden, instead of a sceptre of righteousness, would have been the sceptre of his kingdom. Nay, the very disciples themselves long retained this notion, and first followed him with a view of obtain-

ing honours, profits, and pleasures in their posts under him.

Our Lord and Master, therefore, to show his hearers in general, and his disciples in particular, the grossness of their error, declared that the highest happiness of men consists in the graces of the Spirit, because from the possession and exercise of them the purest pleasures result—pleasures which satisfy even the Almighty himself, and constitute his ineffable felicity.

The rich, the great, the proud, said the great Redeemer of mankind, in whom the wisdom of God was fully displayed, are not happy, as you imagine; they are always wishing for what they cannot obtain, and their disappointments are poisoned arrows festering in their hearts. On the contrary, the poor in spirit are the truly happy, who discharge the duties of their station, whatever it be, with virtue and integrity, and bless the Omnipotent hand who fashioned them in the womb, and guards them from all dangers in this humble vale of sorrow and distress; and though they are excluded from enjoying an earthly kingdom, yet they have a much better reserved for them, eternal in the heavens. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The jocose and flighty are not the happy race of mortals, but, on the contrary, the afflicted, provided they are excited by their afflictions to mourn for their sins, forsake their wicked courses, and seek a better country. For they shall here enjoy the consolation that their sins are forgiven; and, after passing through the valley of the shadow of death, the fruition of eternal joys. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." The truth of this heavenly aphorism is very evident; for what has so great a power to turn the feet of the sons of men into the path of virtue as affliction? Has not affliction a natural tendency to give mankind a distaste to the pleasures of the world, and convince them they are nothing more than vanity and vexation of spirit, and consequently to demonstrate that they must seek for happiness in things more solid and permanent than any in this vale of tears? Affliction awakens the most serious thoughts in the mind; composes it into a grave and settled frame, very different from the levity inspired by prosperity; gives it a fellow-feeling for the sorrows of others; and makes it thoroughly sensible of the danger of departing from God, the source and centre of all its joys.

Nor are the passionate happy, but, on the contrary, the meek. Those who have subdued their tempers can patiently bear provocation, and are strangers to that destructive passion, envy. The meek shall inherit the choicest blessings of this present life; for indeed they principally flow from that benevolent and heavenly temper of mind. Meekness renders a person lovely and venerable in the eyes of his fellow-mortals; and thence he

possesses their sincere esteem, while the passionate and envious man is considered as despicable, though adorned with the robe of honour, and dignified with the most ample possessions. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Through vanity and blindness, men consider as happy those who enjoy the pleasures of this life by rioting in luxury and excess. But this is far from being true; on the contrary, those are the truly happy who have the most vehement desire of treading the paths of virtue and religion; for they, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, shall obtain everything they desire, and shall be happy here in the practice of righteousness, and, after this transitory life is ended, be received into the blissful mansions of the heavenly Canaan. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Resentment of injuries is not a spring of happiness, but forgiveness of the same; and beings of a humane and beneficent disposition rejoice when they can perform a benevolent action, especially to their fellow-mortals in distress. The merciful shall see themselves recompensed even in this life; for they shall find, after many days, the bread they have cast upon the waters of affliction return tenfold into their bosom. And surely nothing can surpass the pleasure felt by a generous mind at having relieved a brother when pressed beneath a load of misfortunes: the pleasure is Godlike; it is divine! "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

The ineffable pleasures of a pure mind cannot be enjoyed by those who seek it in the goods of this world: it is the lot of those only who have mortified their carnal appetites to enjoy an inward purity of mind. With what delight do we behold the glories of the sun, and contemplate the beautiful scenes of nature that surround us! But what proportion has this to the delight that must fill the minds of those who behold the great Creator himself, who called the whole universe from nothing, and still supports it with the word of his power? "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

The tyrants and conquerors of the earth, who disturb the peace of mankind, are far from happy. It falls to the share of those who love their fellow-creatures, and do all in their power to promote peace and harmony among the children of men; for they imitate the greatest perfection of their Maker, and therefore shall be acknowledged by him for his children, and participate of his happiness. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Nor does happiness consist in liberty and ease, if those privileges are purchased at the expense of virtue; it is the consequence of a persecution for conscience' sake; for those who have suffered the severest trial that human nature is capable of sustaining shall be honoured with the highest rewards

in the blissful mansions of eternity. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Contentment is not to be expected from the applause of the world, but will be the portion of those who are falsely reviled for their righteousness, and share in the affronts offered to God himself; for by these persecutions the prophets of all ages have been distinguished. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. v. 11, 12.)

These are the declarations, with regard to happiness, made by the Son of God; and surely we may believe the words of him who came down from heaven; who, in compassion to our infirmities, took upon himself our nature; and, to redeem us from the power of sin and death, offered himself a sacrifice upon the cross, to satisfy the justice of Omnipotence, and open to us the gates of eternal life.

Having shown in what true happiness consisted, our Saviour addressed himself to his disciples, and explained their duty as the teachers appointed to guide others in the paths that lead to eternal felicity; exciting them to diligence in dispensing the salutary influences of their doctrine and example, that their hearers might honour and praise the great Creator of heaven and earth, who had been so kind to the children of men.

As his definition of happiness was very different from what the Jews were accustomed to hear from the scribes and Pharisees, he thought proper to declare that he was not come to destroy the moral precepts contained in the law or the prophets, but to fulfil or confirm them.

Nothing is so steadfast as the eternal truths of morality: the heavens may pass away, and the whole frame of nature be dissolved, but the rules of righteousness shall remain immutable and immortal. And therefore he ordered his disciples, on the severest penalties, both to enforce by preaching and example the strict observation of all the moral precepts contained in the sacred writings, and that in a much greater latitude than they were taken by the teachers of Israel; and, in consideration of the frailties of human nature, taught them that excellent form of prayer which has been used by Christians of all denominations to this very day.

Our Father. If earthly parents are called fathers, the Almighty has the best title from every creature, and particularly from men, being the father of their spirits, the maker of their bodies, and the continual preserver of both. Nor is this all: he is our Father in a still higher sense, as he regenerates us, and restores his image to our minds; so that, partaking of his nature, we become his children, and can there-

fore, with holy boldness, call him Our Father.

The name of father, as it is used by mankind in general, marks the essential character of the true God, namely, that he is the first cause of all things, or the Author of their being; and, at the same time, conveys a strong idea of the tender love he bears to his creatures, whom he nourishes with an affection, and protects with a watchfulness, infinitely superior to that of any earthly parent. It also teaches us that we owe our being to God, points out his goodness and mercy in upholding us, and expresses his power in giving us the things we ask, none of which are more difficult than creation.

We are likewise taught to give the great God the title of Father, that our sense of the tender relation in which he stands to us may be confirmed, our faith in his power and goodness strengthened, our hopes of obtaining what we ask in prayer cherished, and our desire of obeying and imitating him quickened; for the light of nature teaches us that it is disgraceful in children to degenerate from their parents, and that they cannot commit a greater crime than to disobey the commands of an indulgent father.

Prayer. (*G. Jäger.*)

Lastly, we are commanded to call him Father in the plural number,

and that even in our secret addresses to the throne of grace, to put us in mind that we are all brethren, the children of one common parent, and that we ought to love one another with sincerity, as we pray not for ourselves only, but for all the human race.

Which art in heaven. These words do not suppose the presence of God confined; he is present everywhere; is about our paths, and about our bed, and narrowly inspecteth every action of the sons of men; but they express his majesty and power, and distinguish him from those we call fathers upon earth, and from false gods which are not in heaven, the happy mansions of bliss and felicity, where the Almighty, who is essentially present in every part of the universe, gives more special manifestation of his presence to such of his creatures as he hath exalted to share with him in the eternal felicities of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Hallowed be thy name. By the name of God the Hebrews understood God himself, his attributes, and his works; and therefore the meaning of the petition is, May thy existence be universally believed, thy presence loved and imitated, thy works admired, thy supremacy over all things acknowledged, thy providence reverenced and confided in! May all the sons of men think so highly of his Divine Majesty, of his attributes, of his works, and may we so express our veneration of God, that his glory may be manifested in every corner of the world!

Thy kingdom come. Let the kingdom of the Messiah, or the gospel dispensation, be extended to the utmost parts of the earth, that all the children of men "may become one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. May thy will, O thou great Father of the universe, be done upon us, that by the light of thy glorious gospel we may be enabled to imitate the angels of light, by giving sincere, universal, and constant obedience to thy Divine commands, so far as the imperfection of human nature will permit!

Give us this day our daily bread. Give us from time to time such wholesome and proper food that we may be enabled to worship thee with cheerfulness and vigour.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. The great God, as Supreme Governor of the universe, has a right to support his government by punishing those who transgress his laws. The suffering of punishment, therefore, is a debt which sinners owe to the Divine justice; so that when we ask God in prayer to forgive our debts, we beg that he would be mercifully pleased to remit the punishment of all our sins, particularly the pains of hell; and that, laying aside his displeasure, he would graciously receive us into his favour, and bless us with eternal life.

In this petition, therefore, we confess our sins, and express the sense we have of their guilt, namely, that

they deserve death; and surely nothing can be more proper than such a confession in our addresses to God, because humility and a sense of our own unworthiness, when we ask favours of the Almighty, whether spiritual or temporal, have a tendency to augment the goodness of God in bestowing them upon us.

The terms of this petition are worthy our notice: *Forgive us only as we forgive.* We must forgive others if we hope ourselves to be forgiven, and are permitted to crave from God such forgiveness only as we grant to others; so that if we harbour in our breasts the least envy or malice against any who have offended us, or do not forgive even our enemies, we seriously and solemnly implore the Almighty to condemn us to the punishment of eternal death! How careful, therefore, should men be to purge their hearts from all rancour and malice before they venture into the temple of the Almighty to offer up their prayers to the throne of grace!

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. That is, do not lead us into such temptations as are too hard for human nature, but deliver us by some means from the evil, either by removing the temptation, or increasing our power to resist it. This petition teaches us to preserve a sense of our own inability to repel and overcome the solicitations of the world, and of the necessity there is of our receiving assistance from above, both to regulate our passions and to conquer the difficulties of a religious life.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Because the government of the universe is thine for ever, and thou alone possessest the power of creating and upholding all things; and because the glory of thine infinite perfections remains eternally with thee, therefore all men ought to hallow thy name, submit themselves to thy government, and perform thy will; and, in an humble sense of their dependence, seek from thee the supply of their wants, the pardon of their sins, and the kind protection of thy providence.

This is emphatically called the Lord's Prayer, because delivered by the Son of God himself; and therefore we should do well to understand it thoroughly, that when we enter the temple of the Lord, and address him in solemn prayer, we may have hopes that he will grant our petitions.

The Divine Preacher proceeded to consider the great duty of fasting, in which he directed them not to follow the hypocrites in disfiguring their faces, and in clothing themselves in the melancholy weeds of sorrow, but to be chiefly solicitous to appear before God as one that truly fasteth. Then will the Almighty, who constantly surrounds us, and is acquainted with even the most secret thoughts of our hearts, openly bestow upon us the rewards of a true penitent, whose mortification, contrition, and humility

he can discern without the external appearances of sorrow and repentance.

It must, however, be remembered that our blessed Saviour is here speaking of private fasting, and to this alone his directions are to be applied; for when we are called upon to mourn over public sins or calamities it ought to be performed in the most public manner.

Heavenly-mindedness was the next virtue inculcated by the blessed Jesus; and this he recommended with a peculiar earnestness, because the Jewish doctors were in general strangers to this virtue, in which he was desirous his followers should be clothed, as being the most excellent ornament for a teacher of righteousness.

This virtue is strenuously recommended by our blessed Saviour by showing the deformity of its opposite—covetousness, which has only perishable things for its object. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. vi. 19—21.)

More solid happiness will accrue from depositing your treasures in the chambers of the courts of heaven than in this earthly habitation of clay, where they are subject to a thousand disasters, and even at best can remain only for a short series of years; whereas those that are laid up in the heavenly Jerusalem are permanent, subject to no accident, and will purchase "a crown of glory that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens." Nor let any man be so foolish as to think he can place his heart on the happiness of a future life when his treasures are deposited in this vale of misery; for wherever are laid up the goods which his soul desireth, there his heart and affections will also remain. If therefore ye are desirous of sharing in the joys of eternity, you must lay up your treasures in the "mansions of my Father's kingdom."

Lest they should imagine it was possible to be both heavenly-minded and covetous at the same time, he assured them that this was full as absurd as to imagine a person could at the same time serve and divide his affections equally between two masters of opposite characters. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. vi. 24.)

Our Lord next added a few instances of the power, perfection, and extent of God's providence, in which his tender care for the least and weakest of his creatures fully demonstrates the wise and parental attention of the Deity to all the works of his hand.

He desired them to observe the birds of the air, the lilies, and even the grass of the field; leading his

most illiterate hearers to form a more elevated and extensive idea of the Divine government than the philosophers had attained, who, though they allowed, in general, that the world was governed by God, had very confused notions of his providence with regard to every individual creature and action. He taught them that the Almighty Father of the whole is the guardian and protector of every being in the universe; that every action is subject to his will, and nothing left to the blind determination of chance. And if we direct our lives according to the Divine will, we have surely no reason to be anxious about the necessaries of life. "Behold," says the blessed Jesus, "the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matt. vi. 26.) Are not the fowls of the air, who have no concern for future wants, fed and nourished by the beneficent hand of your heavenly Father? and can ye doubt that man, whom he hath made the lord of the whole earth, shall be destitute of his tender care? "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Matt. vi. 28, 29.) Surely if Omnipotence thus beautifully clothes the inanimate productions of the fields, whose duration is remarkably transient and uncertain, you have not the least reason to doubt but he will bless your honest endeavours, and send you proper clothing: are ye not of infinitely more value than they? Be you anxiously solicitous to obtain the happiness of the life to come; and all the good things of this life shall, by the blessing of Divine Providence, be added unto you.

Our Lord then prohibited all rash and uncharitable censure, either with

The Lily.

regard to the characters of others in general, or of their actions in particular, lest, in so doing, both God and man resent the injury. If you judge charitably, says the meek and benevolent Redeemer of the human race, making proper allowance for the frailties of human nature, and are ready to pity and pardon their faults, both your heavenly Father and man will deal with you after the same manner. But if you always put the harshest construction upon

every action, and are not touched with a feeling of your brother's infirmities, nor show any mercy in the opinions you form of his character and actions, no mercy will be shown you either from Omnipotence or the sons of men. God will inflict on you the punishments you deserve, and the world will be sure to retaliate the injury. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matt. vii. 1, 2.)

The blessed Jesus ended his pious discourse by inculcating an entire reformation in themselves—a particular absolutely necessary in those whose office it is to reprove and reform their brethren. And surely nothing can be more preposterous than to condemn in others what we practise ourselves, or to set up for reformers of the world when we are ourselves contaminated with the most enormous vices. With what countenance can we undertake to rebuke others for small faults, when we are ourselves plunged in the most detestable pollutions? With what might the Redeemer of the world say, "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matt. vii. 5.)

These are the important points of doctrine recommended by the infallible Preacher as necessary to the teachers of the gospel of peace; but it is not enough that they know and practise the several branches of their duty: to extend these doctrines among mankind, there must also be a readiness, and even a desire in the people to receive them; for if these be wanting, all attempts to spread these heavenly truths will prove abortive; and therefore our blessed Saviour added, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." (Matt. vii. 6.) Do not reprove men of a snarling disposition, as the attempt, instead of having the happy effects intended, will but provoke them to pursue their wickedness with greater boldness than ever. You may warn others against their company and example, you may weep over them, and you may pray to your heavenly Father for them; but you cannot reprove them with safety, or any hopes of success. Lest the disciples should think that these precepts were not to be attained by human nature, he directed them to apply to God for the assistance of his Spirit, together with all the other blessings necessary to their salvation, assuring them that if they asked with earnestness and perseverance, the Father of mercies would not fail to answer their requests, adding the noblest precept of morality ever delivered by any teacher: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matt. vii. 12.) How clear a rule of

duty is this! how easy and applicable to practice!

Having enforced these heavenly precepts, he exhorted them to place an humble dependence on the Spirit, to strive to practise the precepts of religion, however difficult the task may appear. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. vii. 13, 14.) How strait indeed is the gate, how narrow the way, that leadeth to life! In the way nothing is to be found that flatters the flesh, but many things that have a tendency to mortify it: poverty, fasting, watching, injuries, chastity, sobriety. It receives none that are puffed up with the glory of this life; none that are elated and blown up with pride; none that are distended with luxury. It does not admit those that are laden with caskets of riches, or encumbered with the goods of this world. None can pass through it but those who are stripped of all worldly lusts, and who, having put off their bodies, are, if I may be allowed the expression, emaciated into spirits. There is, however, no reason for us to despair of entering through this heavenly portal: if we sincerely endeavour, the assistance of the Holy Spirit will make us more than conquerors, and we shall safely pursue our journey along the narrow path till we arrive at the blissful mansions of the heavenly Canaan. But lest evil-minded men, under the mask of piety and religion, should endeavour to draw them from the paths of righteousness, our blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples to beware of such persons, and carefully make the strictest scrutiny into their lives and doctrines.

Our Lord closed his sermon with the parable of the houses built on different foundations, intimating that the bare knowledge or the simple hearing of the divinest lessons of morality ever delivered—nay, even the belief of these instructions, without the practice of them—is of no manner of importance. Religion is the only foundation on which we can so firmly establish ourselves as not to be shaken by all the tempests of afflictions, temptations, and persecutions of this present life. It is this foundation alone which, like a flinty rock or the eternal basis of the mountains, can support us in the day of trial. This alone can enable us to frustrate the attempts of men and devils, and patiently endure all the troubles of mortality.

CHAPTER VII.

Our blessed Lord cures the leprosy and palsy. Casts out a devil. Succours the mother-in-law of Peter; and afterwards pursues his journey through the country of Galilee.

THE great Preacher of Israel, having finished his excellent discourse, came down from the mountain, surrounded by a multitude of people, who had listened with astonishment to the doctrines he delivered, which were soon confirmed by divers miracles. A leper met him in his way to Capernaum, and being doubtless acquainted with the wondrous works he had already performed, threw himself with great humility before the Son of God, using this remarkable expression, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The species of leprosy common among the Jews and other Eastern nations was equally nauseous and infectious; but this was so far from preventing the blessed Jesus from approaching so loathsome an object, that it increased his pity; he even touched him; but instead of being polluted himself, the leper was instantly cleansed, and he departed, glorifying God.

The evangelist adds that Jesus forbade him to tell any person what had

The Priest.

been done, but repair immediately to the priest, and offer the gift commanded by Moses. Having effected

the cure on the leper, our blessed Jesus proceeded to Capernaum; but as he entered the city he was met by a Roman centurion, who represented to him, in the most pathetic manner, the deplorable condition of his servant, who was grievously afflicted with a palsy. The compassionate Redeemer of the world listened attentively to his complaint, and immediately told him he would come and heal him. The centurion thought this too great a condescension to one who was not of the seed of Jacob, and therefore told him that he did not mean that he should give himself the trouble of going to his house, which was an honour he had not the least reason to expect, as he was assured that his word alone

Melchizedek blessing Abraham. (*A. Strähuber.*)

would be sufficient, disease and devils being as much subject to his commands as his soldiers were to him.

Our Lord was not ignorant of the centurion's faith, or the basis on which it was built; he well knew the thoughts of his heart long before he uttered his request; and to make this faith the more conspicuous, he gave it the praise it so justly deserved: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (Matt. viii. 10.)

This centurion doubtless relied upon the miracle Jesus had before wrought upon the nobleman's son; but the excellency and peculiarity of it consisted in applying the most

grand ideas of the Divine power to Jesus, who, according to outward appearance, was only one of the sons of men. This exalted faith induced the blessed Jesus to declare the gracious intentions of his Almighty Father with regard to the Gentiles, namely, that he would as readily accept their faith as that of the Jews, and place them with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; while those who boasted of being the offspring of these great patriarchs, but fell far short of the heathens in faith, should be excluded from the blissful seats of paradise. "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. viii. 11, 12.)

Having thus addressed the multitude, the blessed Jesus turned himself to the centurion, and said, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee;" and the evangelist adds, "His servant was healed in the selfsame hour." (Matt. viii. 13.)

On the succeeding Sabbath our Saviour went into the Jewish synagogue at Capernaum, and taught the people, delivering his instructions in so graceful and elegant a manner that they were all astonished; and to increase their admiration, one of the congregation, possessed with an unclean spirit, cried out in a terrible manner, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." (Mark i. 24.)

But the blessed Jesus, who wanted the testimony of no such confessors, commanded him to keep silence, and immediately to come out of the man, which command the evil spirit instantly obeyed, to the great surprise and astonishment of the spectators.

The enemies of the gospel have always endeavoured to depreciate our Saviour's miracles, pretending that no more is meant by a person possessed of the devil than that he was afflicted with some loathsome disease, and that because sepulchres were considered as polluted places, therefore, whenever any melancholy persons frequented them, they were said to be possessed with unclean spirits. They add that it will be difficult to assign a reason why demons were at this time more numerous in Judea than any other country.

In answer to the first of these objections—that these demoniacs were in reality nothing more than persons afflicted with some loathsome disease—we reply that it is evidently false, the evangelists having taken care to be very particular on this head. "They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." (Matt. iv. 24.) "He gave to the apostles

power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases." (Matt. x. 1.) "He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils." (Mark i. 34.) It is therefore evident that those said to be possessed with unclean spirits were different from those that had diseases. Let us, therefore, pass to the second objection, and see whether we cannot give a satisfactory reason why demons were at this time more numerous in Judea than in any other country.

That there were evil spirits of this kind is abundantly evident from the Holy Scriptures, the sacred penmen having taken care to acquaint us with their origin and fall, their names and numbers, their government and orders, their malicious designs and employments, with several other particulars; so that no one can doubt of the existence of demons who believes these holy oracles to be the word of God. It is equally evident, both from sacred and profane history, that before our Saviour's advent great numbers of men were possessed of those evil spirits; and therefore, one end of the incarnation of the Son of God being to "destroy the works of the devil," we may easily see the reason why Omnipotence suffered these apostate spirits to appear so frequently in Judea at the time of our Saviour's ministry; namely, that the Son of God might in a more signal manner triumph over all the powers of darkness, and convince mankind that he was truly the Saviour of the world.

But to return. The fame of this miracle was soon spread over the neighbouring country. He had before healed the sick, and done many other wonderful things; but to command with authority the unclean spirits to quit their residence, and to see these enemies to mankind readily obey his voice, filled them with astonishment, and abundantly convinced them that he was filled with the Spirit of God.

It has been asked why the devil, who, it is plain from the text, knew our Saviour to be the Son of God, should put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, since this was the proper method of accomplishing the redemption of mankind. But the answer to this is obvious and easy. The devil, doubtless, knew Jesus to be the Messiah, but he was ignorant of the mystery of man's redemption; and therefore, though he was not ignorant of his divinity, yet he might be so far infatuated as to think that, by destroying his humanity, he should defeat the great design of Omnipotence; for, however extensive we may suppose his intellectual faculties to be, yet the wonderful work of man's redemption by the death of Christ was a mystery that no finite understanding could comprehend till God himself was pleased to reveal it.

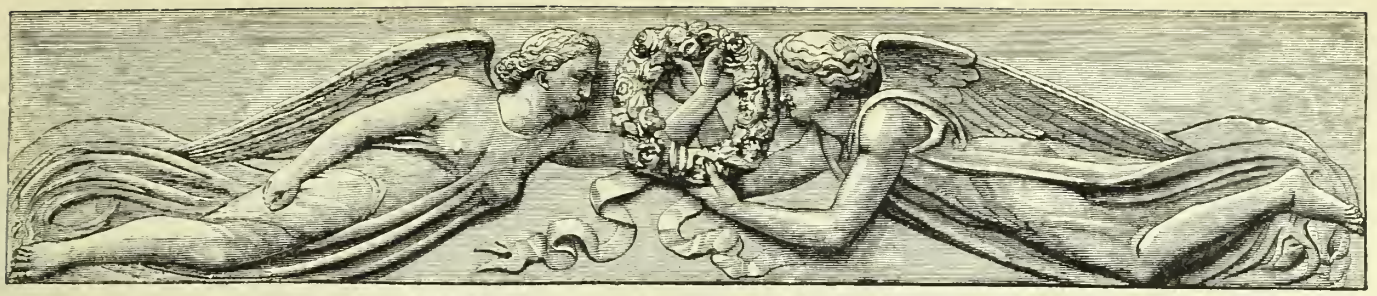
Having performed this astonishing miracle in the synagogue, our Lord retired to Peter's house, where he found his wife's mother sick of a

fever; but, on his taking her by the hand, she was immediately restored to her former health, and arose from the bed and "ministered unto him."

The evangelist St. Luke, in his account of this miraculous cure, tells us that "he rebuked the fever," (Luke iv. 39,) to intimate his authority over all diseases, being analogous to the figurative expressions in Scripture, which not only represent all inanimate creatures as servants to the Almighty, but diseases, famine, pestilence, and the like, as executioners waiting on him to inflict punishment on rebellious sinners. "Before him went the pestilence, and burning diseases went forth at his feet." (Hab. iii. 5.)

The fame of these miracles was soon spread through the city; and as soon as the Sabbath was over, which ended at the setting of the sun, the whole city was gathered together about Peter's house, and with them great numbers of sick persons, and those possessed with devils. The sight of so many human objects in distress excited the pity of this heavenly physician, so that he immediately healed them all; and thus was the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sickness."

But the vast concourse of people that now gathered round him in Capernaum began to be troublesome, and he retired into a desert, whither the multitude soon followed him, and entreated him never to depart from them; but as this request was inconsistent with the design of his mission, he for the first time refused their request, "and preached in the synagogues of Galilee." (Luke iv. 44.)



CHAPTER VIII.

Jesus confirms his mission by producing a miraculous draught of fishes; curing the leprosy a second time; appeasing the boisterous waves; casting devils out of divers persons grievously possessed.

OUR blessed Lord, having spread his glorious doctrine throughout Galilee, returned to Capernaum, and was followed by such throngs of people that he found it necessary to step into Peter's ship, from whence he taught the multitude, who stood on the shore listening with great attention to his doctrine.

Having concluded his sermon, he turned himself to Simon Peter, desiring him to launch out further from the shore, and let down his net; on which the disciple told him of the unsuccessful pains they had taken during the whole night, but added that he would, in obedience to his command, make one trial more. Nor had he any cause to repent; for the net was no sooner in the lake than they found it so full of fishes that it was in danger of breaking, the draught being so large that they were compelled to call "unto their partners in another ship that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both ships."

This success, after such ill-fortune, astonished Peter, who, falling down at the feet of Jesus, cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He was conscious of the many sins he had been guilty of, and therefore afraid of being in the company of so Divine a person, lest some infirmity or offence might have exposed him to more than ordinary chastisements.

But the benevolent Redeemer of mankind allayed his fears, and told him that from henceforth the employments of him and his companions should be far more noble: they should "catch men;" that is, they should turn them from the crooked paths of iniquity to the strait road leading to the heavenly mansions.

This miracle was considered by the disciples as a plainer manifestation of his being the Son of God

than those they had seen him perform on the sick in the city and neighbourhood of Capernaum.

It was a received opinion among the Jews that all good men, by prayers and laying their hand on the sick, were able to cure certain diseases, and even to cast out devils, but that the creatures inhabiting the element of air or water were subject only to the commands of Omnipotence himself; consequently, the power shown by our blessed Saviour on this occasion undeniably proved him to be Divine. And accordingly this demonstration of his power rendered these disciples, for the future, absolutely devoted to his will; and in

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes. (Raffaelle.)

the greatness of their admiration they abandoned everything, and followed the Saviour of the world.

The disciples, being thus attached to their Divine Master, followed him through the cities of Galilee, where, according to his usual custom, he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, and confirmed the doctrine he delivered with astonishing miracles.

In one of the cities through which he passed he found "a man full of leprosy, who, seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." (Luke v. 12.)

It was the custom in Judea for the priests to banish from society those persons who were afflicted with the contagious species of leprosy. The

disease of this person, therefore, was of a less pestilent kind, as he was suffered to be permitted to enjoy the conversation of men. His case, however, excited the pity of the compassionate Jesus, who immediately cleansed him, and ordered him to repair to Jerusalem, and, after showing himself to the priest, offer the gift commanded by Moses; giving him the same admonition he had done before, namely, not to tell any man what had been done for him. But the blessing he had received was so great and unexpected that, instead of concealing, he published everywhere the great things Jesus had done for him, which brought such crowds to the Son of God that he was obliged to retire from Capernaum into the wilderness to refresh his body with rest, and his spirit with prayer and meditation.

The generality of commentators suppose that this leper, and the other mentioned in the foregoing chapter, are one and the same person; but this is a mistake. The former was cured in the fields, the latter in the city. After cleansing the first, Jesus went to Capernaum, and healed the centurion's servant; but after curing the latter he retired into the wilderness to shun the prodigious crowds which soon gathered round him, from the leper's publishing everywhere the miracle Jesus had wrought for him.

If the curious should inquire why our blessed Saviour so often commanded the people to conceal his miracles, we answer them, His modesty and humility would not suffer that his works should have the least appearance of ostentation, nor the Jews to have the least pretence for accusing him of "seeking his own glory." Nor was it proper at this time to irritate too greatly the scribes and Pharisees. He well knew that in a certain determined space of time they would bring about what had been determined concerning him in the council of Omnipotence. In the meantime, "he was to work the works of him that sent him while it was day," (John ix. 4,) and to propagate his gospel as much as possible, both among the Jews and Gentiles, which could not have been so conveniently performed if the greatness of his miracles had once provoked the malice and envy of his enemies to exert their utmost power against him. He likewise knew the mad, capricious humour of the multitude, and had reason to apprehend "that they might come and take him away by force, and make him king," (John vi. 15,) if all his miracles had been blazed abroad before he had sufficiently instructed them in the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and that his throne was not to be established in the earthly, but in the heavenly Jerusalem.

From these instances we see that the blessed Jesus did not without sufficient reason desire his miracles to be concealed. The fame of this single miracle being spread through the neighbouring countries, brought such multitudes of people to Caper-

naum, that, as I have already observed, he was obliged to retire into a solitary part of the neighbouring wilderness. Nor could he long enjoy the repose and tranquillity he sought, even in this thirsty waste; the people soon discovered the place of his retreat, and flocked to him from every quarter.

Our blessed Lord, finding all his endeavours to conceal himself in the desert would be in vain, ordered his

The Heir cast out. (*W. Cave Thomas.*)

disciples to accompany him to the other side of the lake, upon which a certain scribe, who happened to be present, declared he would follow him; but Jesus, who well knew that his desire was only to gain the profits and advantages of an earthly kingdom, which he supposed the Messiah would establish, told him that if he intended nothing more by following him than to improve his worldly fortune, he would find himself wretchedly mistaken. "The foxes have holes," said the blessed Jesus to this teacher

of Israel, "and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Matt. viii. 20.)

The title "Son of man" is a name by which the Messiah is called in the prophecy concerning him recorded by the prophet Daniel (vii. 13), where his universal dominion is described; and therefore, when applied to our great Redeemer, denotes his human nature, and, at the same time, conveys an idea of that glorious kingdom over which he was in his human nature to preside; but, as it was also the name by which the old prophets were called, from the contempt in which they were held by their countrymen, it is used on several occasions to express the deep humiliation of the Son of God.

The disciples, having prepared the ship, took on board their Master, and departed for the other side of the lake, attended by many boats full of people, who were desirous of hearing his heavenly discourses, and being spectators of his astonishing works. But Jesus, being fatigued with the labours of the day, sat himself down at the stern of the ship, and fell asleep.

The weather, which had till now been calm and serene, suddenly changed. A terrible storm came on, and the rising waves dashed impetuously against the ship, threatening every moment to bury them all in the bowels of the deep. The darkness of the night increased the horrors of the tempest. Now they were carried on the top of the mountainous waves, and seemed to touch the skies; then plunged to the bottom of the deep, while the foaming billows roared horribly above them. In vain the disciples exerted their utmost strength; the storm continued to increase, and baffled all the efforts of human strength. The waves broke over the ship, the waters rushed in, and she began to sink. All hopes of escaping were vanished; despair seized every individual; and they were on the brink of perishing, when they ran to Jesus, crying out, "Master, Master, we perish!" Their vehement cries roused him from his sleep. He raised his hand, so often employed in acts of mercy and benevolence, and, with a stern and awful voice, rebuked the boisterous element. The raging sea instantly obeyed his command. The aërial torrent stopped short in its impetuous course, and became silent as the grave; while the mountainous waves sunk at once into their beds, and the surface of the deep became as smooth as polished marble.

The disciples had before seen their great Master perform many miracles, and therefore had abundant reason to rely wholly on his power and goodness. They should have considered that he who could by his word restore the sick, and bring the inhabitants of the sea to their nets, could with the same ease have supported them on the surface of the deep, had the ship sunk beneath them, and carried them safe to the place whither they were going. But they seemed to

have forgotten the power of their Master, and, when human assistance failed, to have abandoned all hopes of life. The blessed Jesus, therefore, very justly rebuked them: "Why are ye fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" Why would you doubt of my power to protect you? The voyage was undertaken at my command, and therefore you should have been confident that I would not suffer you to perish in it.

It is indeed strange that the disciples should have been so remarkably terrified during the storm, and after it to make this reflection, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matt. viii. 27.)

But it should be remembered that the terror of the storm had deprived them of all presence of mind, so that they did not recollect the Divine power of their Master during the fury of the tempest; and the transition from a terrible storm to the most perfect calm was so quick and astonishing, that they uttered this reflection before the confusion in their minds was over.

Soon after the storm was allayed they arrived in the country of Gadara; and on their landing, two men possessed with devils came from the tombs to meet Jesus. One of them, who was more furious than the other, had been often bound with chains and fetters, but to no purpose, being always broken with great fury, so that no man attempted further to restrain him. Being, therefore, at liberty, he shunned the society of men, wandered day and night in desert places, among the sepulchres or caverns where the dead were deposited, crying and making the most dismal complaints, and cutting himself with stones.

The disciples were terrified at the approach of these furious mortals; but Jesus soon dissipated their fears, commanding, while the men were at a distance, the devils to come out of them. The heavenly mandate was no sooner given than they fell on their faces, crying out, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?" (Mark v. 7.) "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. viii. 29.) "I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." (Mark v. 7.) The apostate spirits well knew the power of the Son of God, and trembled lest he should immediately cast them into the torments prepared for them, and not suffer them to continue moving through the earth till the day of judgment, when they should be condemned to eternal punishments in the sight of the whole creation.

Jesus, being willing that the torment suffered by these miserable men should be known before he healed them, asked one of the devils his name, who answered, "Legion, for we are many;" (Mark v. 9;) begging, at the same time, that he would not command them to repair into the deep, or bottomless pit, but suffer them to enter a herd of swine feeding at a distance.

How subtle are the wiles of the devil! The power of the Son of God, he knew, was not to be resisted; but he could not help envying the benevolent miracles he had wrought for the sons of men, and was therefore willing to prevent as much as possible their good effects on the miserable people of this country.

This was the true reason why he begged leave to enter the herd of swine; he knew, if he could obtain that permission, he could destroy them; and this he hoped would render our blessed Saviour odious to the wicked inhabitants of Gadara.

Though Jesus well knew his crafty design, yet he permitted the devils to enter the swine, that his disciples and others who were with him might be fully convinced that these unhappy persons were really possessed by apostate spirits, and at the same time give them a terrible instance of their power when free from all restraint.

The Divine permission was no sooner granted than the spectators beheld at a distance the torments these poor creatures suffered, with what amazing rapidity they ran to the confines of the lake, leaped from the precipices into the sea, "and perished in the waters;" while the persons who, a moment before, were raving and cutting themselves in the most shocking manner, became at once meek and composed, having recovered entirely the exercise of their reason.

The keepers of the herd, terrified at this astonishing miracle, ran into the city, publishing in every part the cure of the men possessed with the devils, and the destruction of the swine. This surprising report threw the inhabitants into the greatest consternation. They left the city to be spectators of so wonderful an event; but when they saw the men who had been possessed sitting at the feet of Jesus, decently clothed, and in their right minds, their fear was increased; for, knowing they had trespassed in keeping the swine, which was contrary to the law of Moses, they dreaded a more severe punishment, and being ignorant of the goodness of Jesus, though he had given them so remarkable a proof of it in the cure of these wretched mortals, besought him that he would leave their country.

There prevailed a custom among the heathens, when any illustrious hero had delivered his country from wild beasts, monsters, tigers, or any other evil, to erect proud columns to his memory; his statue was seen in every place; altars blazed to his glory; they honoured him with the high appellation of Saviour; and thought nothing, not even Divine honours, too great to confer upon him. But when Christ had removed a monster from the Gadarenes more formidable and fearful than any in heathen history, even a "legion of devils," and rendered the way, by which no man could pass before, secure from danger, instead of being received by them as a Saviour and as a God, with the acclamations and hosannas of the

people, he was besought to depart out of their coasts. Stupid people! They had, indeed, lost their herd of swine; but surely the valuable gift they had received in two of their countrymen and fellow-creatures being delivered from the tyranny of Satan was better than the cattle on a thousand hills, and merited at least their thanks and acknowledgments.

This stupid request of the Gadarenes was, however, complied with by the blessed Jesus, who, entering the ship, returned to the country from whence he came, leaving to them a valuable pledge of his love, and to us a noble pattern of perseverance in well-doing, even when our kindnesses are condemned or requited with injuries. He would not suffer the persons dispossessed to accompany him, though they earnestly requested it, but ordered them to stay in their own country as a standing monument both of his power and goodness. "Go home to thy friends," said the compassionate Jesus to one of them, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." (Mark v. 19.)

We cannot but remark in this place that we have here a fuller display of the tyranny and power of the devil than in any other part of Scripture; and therefore we may oppose it to the loose scoffs, and recommend it to the serious attention, of those infidels and thoughtless sinners who, like the Pharisees and Sadducees of old, when exhorted to abandon their evil courses, from a consideration of the power of Satan and the dread of eternal torments, make a mock at both, esteeming them nothing more than religious fables calculated to keep an ignorant world in awe. But with regard to themselves, their minds are too well furnished with wisdom, and their geniuses too penetrating, to believe anything of the flames of the bottomless pit, and the malice of the prince who sways the sceptre of that horrid place, esteeming him a more mild and generous governor than he is represented in this miracle. But could they be persuaded to attend seriously to the miserable spectacle drawn by the evangelist of a wretched mortal, naked, dwelling in tombs, crying out day and night, cutting himself with stones, furious, fierce, destructive, surely their scoffs and idle mockeries would be changed into compassion and a watchful care of themselves. This surely common prudence would dictate. But if they will deride and still disbelieve, a short space of time, perhaps a single moment, will convince them of their fatal error, and dreadful experience force them to acknowledge the greatness of the tyranny, the bitterness and malice, of this prince of darkness against the souls of the sons of men. May that blindness of mind and obduracy of heart be removed, that so they may know and acknowledge the salvation of God, even Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life!

CHAPTER IX.

Our Lord proceeds in acts of mercy and benevolence. Adds Matthew to the number of his disciples. Casts out an evil spirit. Passes again through Galilee. Selects twelve from among his disciples as his constant followers and companions, and harangues the multitude in an excellent discourse.

THE arrival of our Saviour and his disciples at Capernaum, a city of Galilee, was no sooner published than throngs of people were gathered together, that the house could not contain them, nor even the court before the door. He, however, preached the words of eternal life to the listening audience, among whom were many Pharisees and doctors of the law, who, from the fame of his miracles, were come from all quarters to hear him.

He not only addressed them in the most nervous and pathetic manner, in order to inculcate the doctrines he delivered, but also performed such astonishing miracles as ought to have removed all their scruples with regard to the truth of his mission.

Among other instances he gave of his Divine power was that of restoring a man to perfect health who had long been afflicted with the palsy, and was reduced by that terrible disease to the most melancholy condition, being unable to move any member of his body, but seemed rather an emaciated carcass than a man. This miserable object was supported in his bed by four persons, who, being unable to enter by the door on account of the multitude, carried him to the top of the house, which, like the other roofs in that country, was flat, and had a battlement round, according to the direction given by Moses. (Deut. xxii. 8.)

On these roofs there was a kind of trap-door, by which they came out of the houses upon the roofs, where they spent a considerable part of the day. It was also common to have a flight of stairs from the garden to the roof, and by these the persons seem to have carried the sick of the palsy; but finding the door fastened, forced it open, or uncovered the roof, and through the opening let down by

ropes the sick of the palsy, lying on his bed, into the midst of the company before Jesus, who seeing the faith of the friends of this afflicted person, he had compassion on him, and spake aloud, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee."

The pride of the scribes taking offence at this saying, cried out, This man speaketh blasphemy; for he appropriates that to himself which is solely the property of Omnipotence. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" They were ignorant that the person who uttered such gracious words was the Son of God, and consequently had the power of forgiving the sins of the human race.

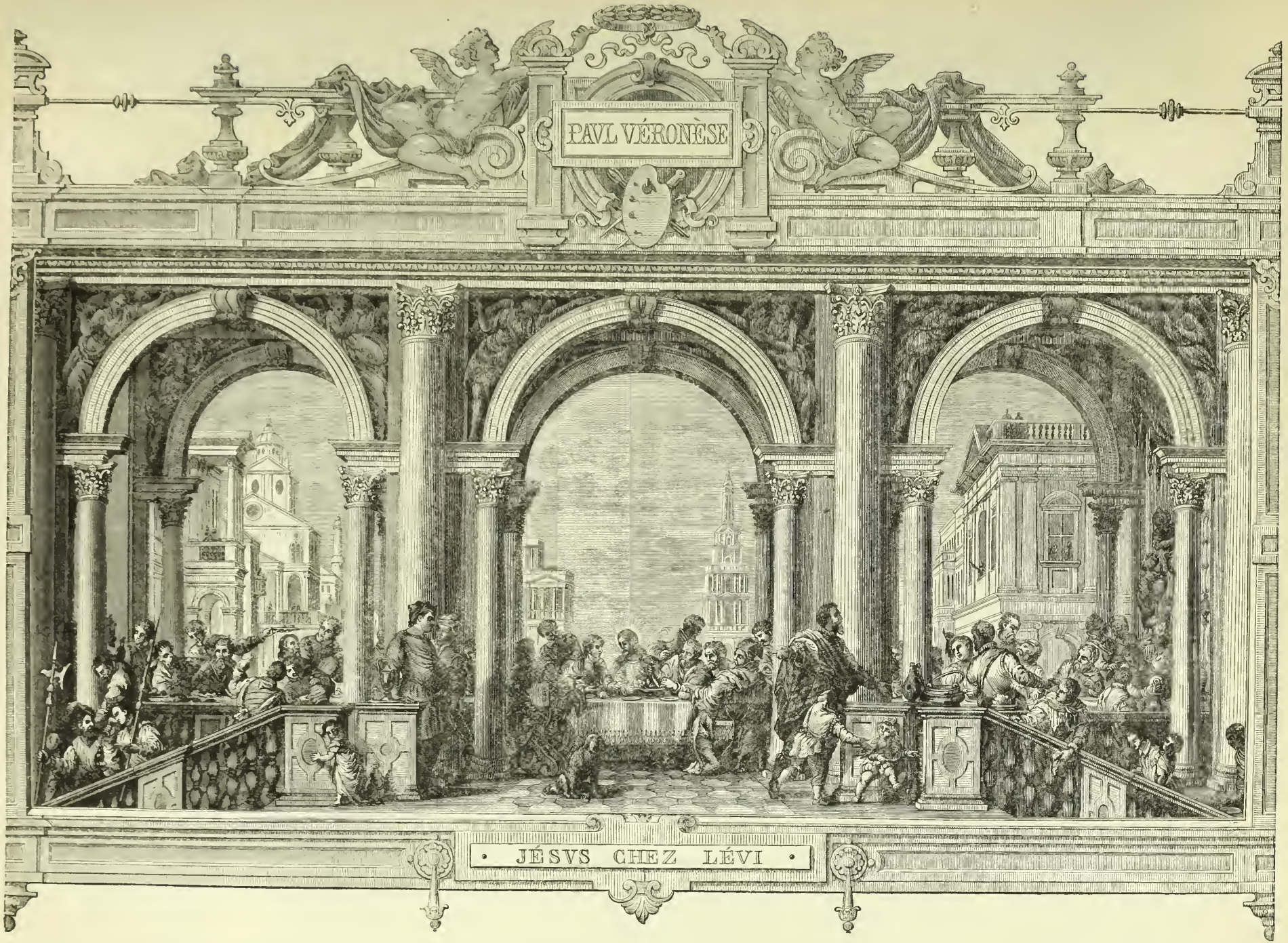
But our Lord, who had recourse to the most secret recesses of the heart, and was willing to show them that he was really endued with the Spirit of God, said to them, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk?" These were questions that could only be resolved of the latter, it being doubtless easier to forgive sins than remit that which is inflicted as its punishment. But these incorrigible mortals held their peace, and the blessed Jesus only added that the miracles he was going to perform would sufficiently demonstrate that he had not usurped what did not in the strictest manner belong to him; and turning himself from these bigoted teachers of Israel towards the sick of the palsy, he said unto him, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine own house." (Matt. ix. 6.)

Nor was this Divine mandate any sooner given than the man was restored to his former health and strength, and, to the astonishment of all present, rose, took up his bed, and departed to his own house, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw this great work, expressed the highest degree of surprise, mixed with admiration, for the great honour the Almighty had conferred on human nature: "They glorified God, who had given such power unto men."

But with regard to the scribes and Pharisees, though they must have been confounded at the miracle, yet they still continued in their unbelief —an instance which should awaken in us the most serious thoughts, as it abundantly demonstrates that the palsy of the soul is a much more deplorable disease than the palsy of the body.

The blessed Jesus, having wrought this miracle, repaired to the sea-side, and taught a multitude of people. What the subject of his sermon was the evangelists have not told us; but it was doubtless, like the rest, calculated to promote the eternal welfare of mankind.

His discourse being ended, he returned to the city, and in his way saw Matthew, or Levi, the son of Alpheus, a rich publican, sitting in his office, where the customs are levied at the port of Capernaum, whom he ordered to follow him. Matthew



Jesus at the House of Levi.

immediately obeyed the summons, and followed the Saviour of the world, to pursue a far more honourable and important employment, being afterwards both an apostle and evangelist.

A few days after his conversion he made a splendid entertainment for his Master, inviting all the publicans

The Prophet Hosea. (*Raffaelle.*)

he knew, hoping that by hearing the heavenly conversation of Christ they might also repent, and embrace the doctrines of the gospel.

The self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, who considered all men as sinners except themselves, especially the publicans, were highly offended that one who called himself a prophet so far demeaned himself as to be seen in the company of such men; and asked his disciples, with an air of insolence, in the hearing of all the guests, how their Master could sit down at the same table with publicans and sinners.

Our Lord replied to this artful query, that the sick only had need of a physician, and desired them to reflect seriously on the prophet Hosea's declaration: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." The turning sinners into the paths of righteousness, which is the highest act of benevolence, is far more acceptable to the Almighty than all the ceremonies of the law of Moses, so highly magnified by your fraternity, who on many occasions observe them at the expense of charity; adding, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The repentance of the righteous is not so much the object of my attention as the conversion of sinners.

This answer, however satisfactory to an unprejudiced person, was far from being so to the scribes and Pharisees, who, joining with some of John's disciples then present, returned to Matthew's house, and demanded of him why his disciples wholly neglected to fast, a duty often performed both by the rulers of Israel and the disciples of John. To this the blessed Jesus replied, It is not a proper season for the friends of the bridegroom to fast and afflict themselves while they enjoy his company: "but the days will come when the bridegroom

shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast." The various calamities and afflictions that shall attend them after the departure of their Master shall cause them to fast, which they shall repeat as often as the circumstances of distress and danger with which they are surrounded shall require it; and added, that to have obliged his disciples to have observed the precepts of frequent abstinence at a time when he was employing them to preach the Gospel, by which all the legal ceremonies of the law were to be abolished, would have been as absurd as to sew a piece of new cloth upon a rotten garment, which would only make the rent worse; or to put new wine into old leathern bottles, which on the first fermentation of the liquor would burst; indicating that the whole corrupt nature of man will not admit of a thorough reformation being made at once; that infant virtue must not immediately be put to the greatest trials, lest it be destroyed by the severity of the exercise.

During this controversy between our Lord and the haughty scribes and Pharisees in Matthew's house, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came running to him in all the agonies of grief, and, in the presence of the whole company, fell on the ground before him, beseeching that he would come and heal his daughter, who lay at the point of death.

When did the beneficent Jesus deny his gracious assistance to those who implored it of him? He immediately arose and followed the ruler towards his house, surrounded by a great multitude of people, who were desirous of seeing so great a miracle performed.

But as he passed through the streets, a woman who had for twelve years been afflicted with an issue, or flux, of blood, and had spent her whole substance on physicians to no purpose, "came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole." Nor was she deceived; for no sooner had she touched the border of the garment of the Son of God than "her issue of blood dried up," and she felt, by the return of her health and strength, and other agreeable sensations that accompany such sudden changes from painful diseases to perfect health, that the cure was absolutely complete.

But this transaction could not be concealed: the blessed Jesus knew the whole, and her secret thoughts before she put them in practice; and, pleased with the opinion this woman had entertained both of his power and goodness, would not by any means suffer it to pass unapplauded. Accordingly he turned himself about in the press, and asked, "Who touched me?" He well knew the person, but asked this question for the fuller manifestation of the woman's faith, and that he might have an opportunity of instructing and comforting her.

His disciples, being ignorant of

what had passed, were surprised at the question: "Thou seest," said they to their Master, "the multitude thronging and pressing thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" They did not distinguish between the spiritual and corporeal touch, nor knew that such efficacious virtue had gone out of their Master. Jesus, however, persisted in knowing who it was that had done the thing; and the woman, finding it in vain to conceal her action any longer, came to him trembling, and told him all. Perhaps the uncleanness of her distemper was the reason of her fear, thinking he would be offended even at her touching the hem of his garment. But the Divine Physician, far from being angry, spake to her in the kindest manner, commended her faith, on which account he had consented to heal her plague: "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." (Matt. ix. 22.)

Such a miraculous incident must doubtless have greatly strengthened the ruler's faith; for behold a virtue, little inferior to that of raising the dead, issues from the border of his garment, and heals a disease which for the space of twelve years had baffled all the precepts of the healing art, and defied the power of medicine. Indeed, the faith of this ruler had great need of the strongest confirmation; for news was brought him that his daughter was even now dead, and therefore it was needless for him to give any further trouble to Jesus, not in the least suspecting that he had power to recall the fleeting spirit, and reanimate a breathless carcass.

This message was a terrible blow to the affectionate parent. His only daughter, who a few days before was in the bloom of youth, was now a pale and lifeless corpse; and with her all his joys and comforts were fled. But Jesus, commiserating his grief, desired him to be comforted, promising that his daughter should be made whole.

On coming to the ruler's house he found it full of mourners, who made terrible lamentations—a sufficient demonstration that the damsel was really dead; and accordingly, when our blessed Saviour desired the mourners to cease their funeral ceremonies, as "the maid was not dead, but sleeping," they "laughed him to scorn."

It is necessary to remark in this place, that the Jews, when they speak of a person's death, style it sleep, to intimate their belief that his spirit existeth in the happy scenes of paradise, and their hopes of a future resurrection to life eternal. But the blessed Jesus used the word with remarkable propriety, to signify that though she was now locked in the cold embraces of death, yet he was going to release her from the power of the king of terrors with the same ease as a person is awakened from sleep. Thus our blessed Saviour, in the very manner of performing the miracle, modestly declined the honour that would undoubtedly result from a work so greatly superior to all the power of the sons of men.

Having thus briefly addressed the mourners, he entered the chamber where the damsel was lying, but suffered none to follow him except Peter, James, and John, together with the father and mother of the damsel. Probably his reason for suffering these only to be spectators of so stupendous a work was, that they might have an opportunity of examining the whole transaction in the most careful manner, and be thence enabled afterwards to report it upon the fullest conviction, and with every circumstance of credibility.

The blessed Jesus now approached

The Raising of Jairus's Daughter. (*J. E. Steinle.*)

the body, took her by the hand, and with a gentle voice said, "Maid, arise." The heavenly command was instantly obeyed; the damsel arose as from a sleep, and with all the appearance of health and vigour, for Jesus commanded to give her something to eat—a plain proof that she did not appear in the weak and languishing condition of a person worn out with disease, or even like one who had fainted away, a circumstance that abundantly proves the greatness and perfection of the miracle. It is therefore no wonder that her parents should be astonished at so stupendous

a work, the fame of which was presently spread through all the neighbouring country, though Jesus, who was in every sense above praise, and therefore never courted it, had strictly charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

These instances of power did the blessed Jesus display to convince the world that those who die in him are not dead, and that he hath the keys of life and death. Those also of the present age who believe that the soul sleeps with the body till the resurrection would do well to consider the expression of the evangelist, "Her spirit came again," (Luke viii. 55,) which sufficiently shows that the soul exists separately when the body is laid in the chambers of the grave.

Having performed this benevolent miracle, our blessed Saviour left the ruler's house, and was followed through the streets by two blind men imploring assistance; nor did they implore in vain. The Redeemer of mankind was, and still is, always ready to grant the petitions of those who apply to him for relief. Accordingly, he no sooner entered into the house to avoid the thronging of the multitude than he touched their eyes, and said, "According to your faith be it unto you;" (Matt. ix. 29;) and immediately the valuable gift of sight was bestowed upon them. The blind men were so overjoyed at beholding the light, that though he charged them to keep the miracle a secret, they published his fame in every part of the country, being unwilling to conceal what, in gratitude for so great a mercy, they thought themselves obliged to divulge.

The men who had thus miraculously received their sight being departed, the multitude brought him a "dumb man possessed with the devil." So moving a sight could not fail of attracting a compassionate regard from the Saviour of the world, who, being never weary of well-doing, immediately cast out the apostate spirit, on which the dumb man recovered the use of his speech, and spake in a very rational manner to the multitude, who with one voice declared that such wondrous works were never wrought by any of the old prophets. "It was never so seen in Israel." (Matt. ix. 33.)

These works did not remove the prejudice of the Pharisees, who, being unable to deny the miracle, insinuated that he did it by a power received from Beelzebub, "the prince of the devils"—a poor pretence indeed, which did not escape the animadversion it deserved from the Saviour of the world, as we shall see in a succeeding chapter. Well might the prophet Isaiah cry out in a prophetic ecstasy, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

But all their calumnies could not provoke the meek and merciful Jesus to cease from performing these compassionate offices for the children of men. On the contrary, he exerted himself still more and more to promote the prosperity and salvation of

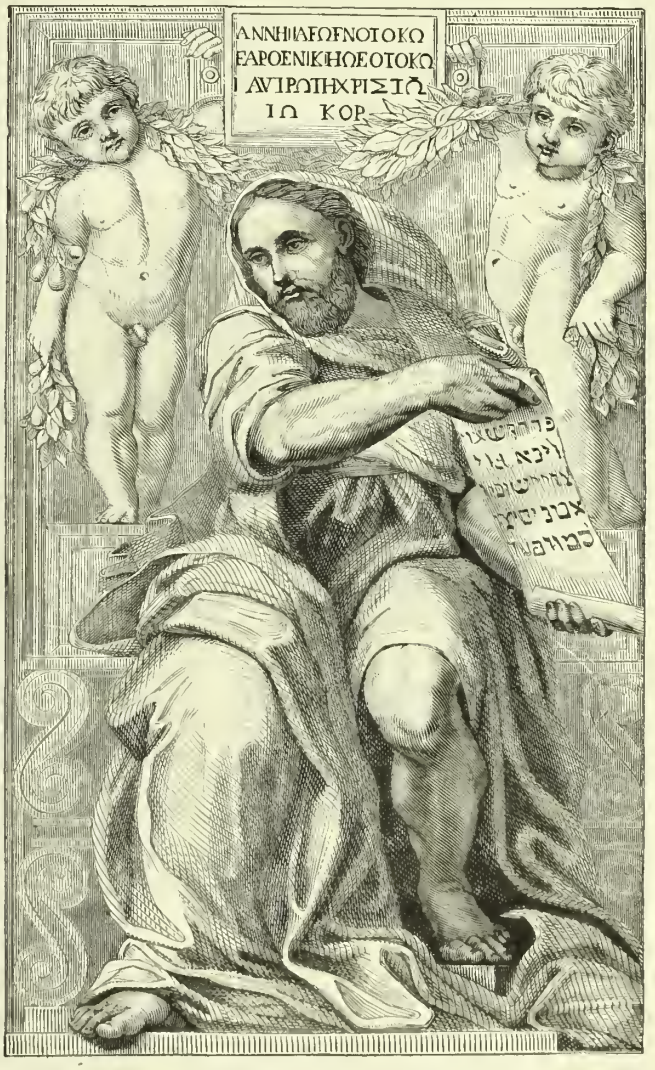
The Raising of Jairus' Daughter

the whole human race; and accordingly he left Capernaum, and travelled through the country in search of miserable objects on whom he might confer happiness and peace, "visiting all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." (Matt. ix. 35.)

In his return from this tour to Capernaum he was attended by a great number of people, who expressed a more than common desire to hear the doctrines of the gospel—an incident abundantly sufficient to engage the attention of this Divine Teacher, who was always careful to cultivate the latent seeds of virtue, and cherish the least appearance of piety and religion.

It was not this desire of the people alone that excited his compassion towards them: he well knew they were wholly destitute of spiritual teachers; for the scribes and Pharisees, who ought to have instructed them, were blind, perverse, and lazy guides, who, instead of seeking the glory of the Almighty, made it their whole business to support and augment their own. They magnified the ritual ceremonies and traditions, but took no care to inspire the people with a love for virtue. "To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God" were no parts of their doctrine. The small appearance of religion they entertained was wholly hypocritical; and the disputes carried on with so much bitterness between the factions of the Pharisees and Sadducees distracted the minds of the people.

The inhabitants of Judea were truly in a deplorable situation, which called loudly for the compassion of the Son of God, who always regarded the descendants of Jacob with the most tender affection. He saw the



The Prophet Isaiah. (Raffaelle.)

sheep of Israel scattered on the barren wastes of error and superstition, without a shepherd to lead them to the heavenly pastures of the law and the prophets. He saw, he commiserated their distress, and he resolved to provide some remedy for it. Accord-

ingly, he directed his apostles to intercede with the Almighty, who by his servants the prophets had sown the seeds of piety and virtue in the minds of the Jews, that he would not suffer the rich harvest to be lost for want of labourers. "The harvest," said the blessed Jesus to his disciples, "truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." (Matt. ix. 37, 38.)

To these gracious acts he added the most powerful of all intercessions to the throne of grace, his own prevailing prayer; and accordingly ascended to the top of the mountain, and there spent the night in making the most powerful petitions in behalf of "the lost sheep of Israel" to his heavenly Father.

Having spent the night in this pious exercise, he lost no time in putting his beneficent intentions in execution; for no sooner had dark-

The Harvest. (*E. Bendemann.*)

ness withdrawn her sable veil, and the blushing rays of the morning adorned the chambers of the east, than this benevolent Redeemer of mankind called his disciples to him, and chose twelve, "whom he named apostles, to be always with him, and that he might send forth to preach." He ordered them to be constantly with him, that they might learn from his own mouth the doctrines they were to preach to the whole world; that they might see his glory, the transcendent glory of the virtues which adorned his human life; and that they might be witnesses of all the wondrous works he should perform during his residence in this world, and by which his mission from the courts of heaven was to be fully demonstrated.

These twelve persons, thus quali-

fied, were to supply the people with that spiritual food they so greatly wanted, both while their Master continued here below, and after his ascension to the right hand of power.

Having ordained them to their respective offices, he sent them out by two and two into the most distant parts of Judea, to preach there the glad tidings of the gospel, and prepare the way for their Master, the great Shepherd of Israel. And that nothing might be wanting to render their preaching acceptable to the people, and confirm the important doctrines they delivered, he invested them with full power to cure all diseases, cast out devils, and even to raise the dead.

Perhaps the number of the twelve apostles was fixed upon, rather than any other, to show that God intended by their ministry to gather together the scattered remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel. But be that as it may, these twelve apostles constantly continued with Jesus from the time of their election till he offered himself a sacrifice on the cross for the sins of mankind, never departing from him unless by his own appointment.

All these persons being illiterate Galileans, and at first destitute of all the qualifications necessary in the discharge of their duty, integrity alone excepted, were the most unlikely persons in the world to confound the wisdom of the wise, baffle the power of the mighty, overturn the many false religions which then flourished everywhere under the protection of the civil government, and, in short, to reform the manners of mankind, then universally corrupted. Had the choice of instruments for so grand an undertaking been committed to human prudence, such, doubtless, would have been chosen as were remarkable for learning, strong reasoning, and prevailing eloquence. But behold, the wisdom of God, infinitely superior to that of man, acted very differently; for the treasure of the gospel was committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of its power might in all countries appear to be of God. Accordingly, the religion which these illiterate Galileans taught through the world exhibited a far juster notion of things than the Grecian and Roman philosophers were able to attain, though their lives were spent in study and contemplation. Hence by its own intrinsic splendour, as well as by the external glory of the miracles that accompanied it, this religion sufficiently appeared to be wholly original and Divine.

Besides, its truth and dignity were sufficiently attested by the remarkable success that attended it. It was received everywhere by the bulk of the people with the highest applause, as something they had been hitherto seeking in vain; while the maxims and precepts of the philosophers never spread further than their respective schools. It was therefore with the highest wisdom that the foundations of the church were laid in the labours of a few illiterate fishermen; for it

demonstrated with irresistible evidence that the immense fabric was at first raised, and is still sustained, not by the arm of flesh, but purely by the hand of the Almighty.

After appointing the twelve apostles, he came down from the mountain, and was joyfully received by multitudes of people who were waiting for him in the plain, and pressed to touch him, well knowing that if they could only touch the border of his garment they should be healed of whatever distemper they were afflicted with—a sufficient reason why they were continually waiting for him, and were willing to accompany him even into the remotest corners of the wilderness.

The preaching and miracles of our

Grecian and Roman Philosophers. (*Raffaelle.*)

Lord were not witnessed by the low and vulgar only; persons of the first rank and character came from distant parts of the country to converse with him, hear his doctrine, and be spectators of his wonderful works. It therefore evidently follows that persons of all ranks were desirous of following him; and this desire could be founded on nothing but the truth of his miracles.

After healing all the sick among the multitude he turned towards his disciples, and delivered a Divine discourse, something like that he had before preached to them on the mountain; but in the former he only pronounced blessings, whereas in the latter he added curses also; and in this principally it differs from that recorded by St. Matthew. I shall, therefore, only select a few passages

from the sermon now delivered, as I have given a large paraphrase on the former.

"Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation." (Luke vi. 24.) Riches, considered in themselves, have no tendency to render us the objects of the Almighty's hatred, unless accompanied with those vices which too often flow from an opulent fortune, as luxury, covetousness, and the like. The woe, therefore, is here denounced against such only as are contaminated with these vices; for those who make a proper use of their wealth, and possess the virtues which should accompany affluence, have no share in the malediction.

"Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger." The pains ye shall suffer in a future life shall be sharp and excruciating. The opportunities you neglected of doing good to your afflicted brethren in this life shall then be remembered with the most poignant grief, and bewailed with the most bitter lamentations.

"Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep." This malediction of our blessed Saviour is not inconsistent with the apostle's precepts, which command Christians always to rejoice. Neither is the mirth against which the woe is here denounced to be understood of that constant cheerfulness of temper which arises in the breasts of true Christians from the comfortable and cheerful doctrine with which they are enlightened by the gospel, the assurance they have of reconciliation with God, the hope they have of everlasting life, and the pleasure they enjoy in the practice of virtue and the other duties of religion; but it relates to that turbulent, carnal mirth, that excessive levity and vanity of spirit, which arises not from any solid foundation, but from immoderate sensual pleasures, or those vain amusements of life in which the giddy and the gay contrive to spend their time; that sort of mirth which dissipates thought, leaves no time for consideration, and gives them an utter aversion to all serious reflection. Persons who constantly indulge themselves in this kind of mirth shall weep and mourn eternally when they are excluded from the joys of heaven, and banished for ever from the presence of God, by the light of whose countenance all the righteous are enlightened and made transcendently happy.

"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Woe unto you if, by propagating such doctrines as encourage men in sin, you shall gain to yourselves the applause and flattery of the generality of men; for thus in old times did the false prophets and deceivers, who, accommodating their doctrines to the lusts and passions of men, gained their applause, but incurred the wrath and displeasure of a just and all-seeing God.

CHAPTER X.

Continuation of our Lord's glorious doctrines, beneficent acts, and astonishing miracles wrought in confirmation of the divinity of his mission, and the extending of his heavenly kingdom.

THE Divine Preacher, having closed this excellent sermon, repaired to Capernaum, and was met by certain messengers from a centurion, desiring him to come and heal a servant who was dear to him and ready to die.

This centurion, from the account given of him by the evangelist, seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion, as he was a lover of the sons of Jacob, and had erected for them a place of worship; and accordingly the inhabitants of Capernaum strongly espoused his cause on this occasion, saying "that he was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue." (Luke vii. 4, 5.)

There was not the least danger that this petition would be rejected by the blessed Jesus, who sought all occasions of doing good to the children of men. Accordingly, he very readily accompanied the messengers; but before he came to the house he was met by some of the centurion's friends, who expressed the high idea that officer entertained of his power, and desired that he would not take the trouble of coming to his house, as his word was abundantly sufficient to perform the cure. At this message Jesus turned himself about, and said to the multitude, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (Luke vii. 9.)

The persons, having delivered their message, returned to the house, and found the servant who had been sick perfectly recovered.

Many persons have thought that this miracle and that mentioned in Matt. viii. are the same; but this is a mistake. The centurion in the former came in person, but in the latter the petition was sent by the elders of Capernaum. There is not the least hint in the first miracle that

the centurion was a proselyte; but he in the second is said to have been a lover of the Jewish nation, and to have built them a synagogue. Several other particulars, which prove these miracles to have been really different, will easily occur to the reader, and therefore I shall not here enumerate them. What has been said will, I presume, be sufficient to remove any objection that may be offered against my considering them as different transactions.

Having thus miraculously healed the centurion's servant, he repaired to Peter's house to eat bread; but the multitude came again together, and surrounded the house in a very tumultuous manner, demanding, in all probability, that he should heal their sick; and it was not without difficulty they were dispersed by his friends.

The multitude being dispersed, Jesus called unto him the twelve apostles he had before chosen, and conferred on them the power of working miracles in confirmation of the doctrines they were appointed to preach, and delivered them such instructions as he thought necessary to enable them to discharge the duties of this important commission.

"Go," said their heavenly Master, "and preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Publish in every corner of Judea the glad tidings of the gospel, and the near approach of the great Messiah's kingdom; not a temporal, but a spiritual empire, consisting of righteousness and peace.

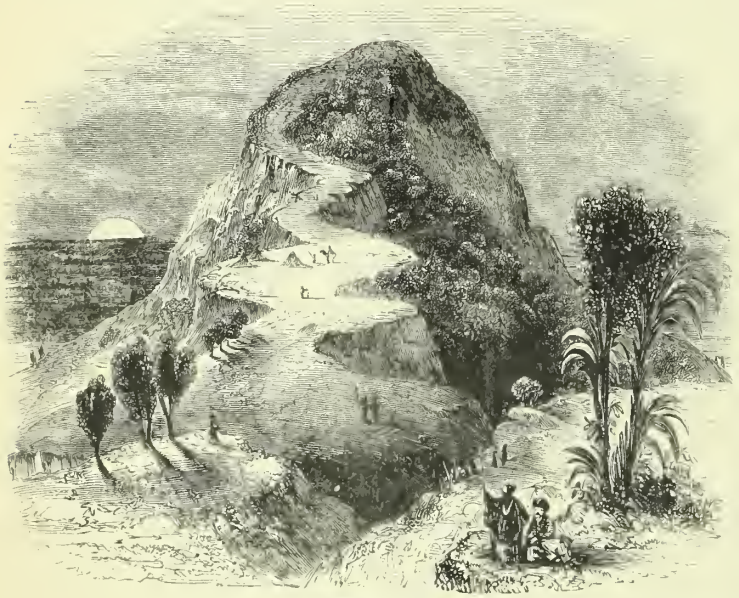
To inure them to those hardships and dangers which were to attend them in their preaching after the death of their Master, our Lord forbad them to provide anything for their journey, teaching them to rely wholly on the providence of God for support in every distress, and to have recourse to his protection in every danger.

Our Lord's disciples had, perhaps, flattered themselves with the pleasing expectation that the glad tidings they were going to publish, and the miraculous cures they were enabled to perform, would procure them an honourable reception wherever they came. Their Master, however, told them the event would not in any manner answer their expectations, but that they were everywhere to be despised, persecuted, delivered into the hands of the rulers, and punished as wicked men; but at the same time he promised them the aid of the Almighty, and gave them instructions for their behaviour in every particular. He added that those who rejected their message should be treated with severity by the great Judge of all the earth; but those who received them kindly, and gave even a cup of cold water to the least of his disciples, for their Master's sake, should not fail of receiving a large reward.

Having received this commission, the apostles visited all the parts of Palestine where the Jews inhabited, preaching the gospel and the doctrine of repentance, working miracles for

its confirmation, and particularly healing the sick, while our blessed Saviour continued the course of his ministry in Galilee.

The apostles being returned from their tour, Jesus went to Nain, a town situated near Endor, about two miles south of Mount Tabor, attended by many of his disciples and a great multitude of people. On their coming to the entrance of the city, a melancholy scene presented itself to the eyes of Jesus and his followers:



Mount Tabor.

"Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." (Luke vii. 12.) Who would not have imagined that God had indeed "forgotten to be gracious, and in his anger shut up his tender mercies" from this poor widow, suffering under the heaviest load, and labouring under the most oppressive burden of distress? Deprived of her only son in the flower of his youth, when he might have repaid his mother's toils, and been to her in the place of a husband—of that husband she had long since lost, and whose loss was supportable only through the comfort of this child, the surviving image of his departed father, the balm of all her grief, the hope of her afflicted soul—who now shall administer consolation to this solitary widow, to this lonely parent, bereaved of her husband, deprived of her child? What misery can be more complicated? What can be more natural than that she should "refuse to be comforted;" that she should "go down to the grave with mourning," and visit the chambers of death, the residence of the beloved remains of her husband and her son, with sorrow?

Towards the receptacle of mortality, that dreary waste of forgetfulness, the mournful funeral was now with slow and solemn pomp advancing, when the compassionate Redeemer of mankind met the melancholy procession, composed of a long train of weeping neighbours and relations, who pitied her distress, sympathised with her in this great affliction, and were melted with compassion at her deplorable circumstances. But sighs and tears were all they had to offer; relief could not be expected from a human being: their commiseration, though grateful to her oppressed soul, could neither restore the husband nor the son. Submission and patience were the only lessons they could preach, or this afflicted daughter of Israel learn.

But though man was unable to re-

lieve the distresses of this disconsolate widow, the Saviour of the world, who beheld the melancholy procession, was both able and willing to do it. There was no need of a powerful solicitor to implore assistance from the Son of God; his own compassion was abundantly sufficient. "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her:" he both sought the patient, and offered the cure unexpectedly. "Weep not," said the blessed Jesus to this afflicted woman. Alas! it had been wholly in vain to bid her refrain from tears who had lost her only child, the sole comfort of her age, without administering the balm of comfort to heal her broken spirit. This our compassionate Redeemer well knew; and therefore, immediately advancing towards the corpse, "he touched the bier:" the pomp of the funeral was instantly stopped, silence closed every mouth, and expectation filled the breast of every spectator. But this deep suspense did not long continue; that glorious voice which shall one day call our dead bodies from the grave filled their ears with these remarkable words: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Nor was this powerful command uttered without its constant effect: "He spake, and it was done:" he called with authority, and immediately "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak; and he restored him to his mother." He did not show him around to the multitude; but, by a singular act of modesty and humanity, delivered him to his late afflicted, now astonished and rejoicing, mother, to intimate that in compassion to her great distress he had wrought this stupendous miracle.

A holy and an awful fear fell on all who heard and saw this astonishing event; "and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is risen up among us; and God hath visited his people."

Here it must be observed that, as this miracle is liable to no objection, it therefore abundantly proves that the power of the blessed Jesus was truly and absolutely Divine. He met this funeral procession by accident. It was composed of the greatest part of the inhabitants of the city, who bewailed the disconsolate state of the afflicted widow, and therefore well knew that the youth was really dead. The powerful word which called the breathless body to life was delivered in an audible voice before all the company, and even at the very gate of the city, the place of public resort. This miracle, with others amply attested, abundantly evinces the truth of our Saviour's mission, and that he was indeed the Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind.

CHAPTER XI.

The character of John the Baptist cleared and justified by the blessed Jesus. Display of our Lord's humility and condescension by conforming to the custom of the age and the place where he lived.

WE have taken notice in a foregoing chapter that Herod, incensed at the honest freedom of the Baptist's reproving his adulterous commerce with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, had cast him into prison, and in this state he still continued, though his disciples were suffered to visit and converse with him. In one of these visits they had given him an account of our Saviour's having elected twelve apostles to preach the gospel, and of his miracles, particularly of his raising to life the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain.

On hearing these wonderful relations, the Baptist immediately despatched two of his disciples to Jesus to ask this important question: "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

Accordingly, the disciples of John came to Jesus, and proposed the question of their master at the very time when he "cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." (Luke vii. 21.) Jesus therefore, instead of directly answering their question, bid them return, and inform their master what they had seen: "Go and show John again those things which ye hear and see: how the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matt. ix. 4, 5.) Go tell your master that the very miracles the prophet Isaiah so long since foretold should be wrought by the Messiah, you have yourselves seen performed.

It appears from Scripture that the Baptist, through the whole course of his ministry, had borne constant and ample testimony to our Saviour's Divine mission; that he exhorted those who came to him to rest their faith not on himself, but on "him

that should come after him;" and that as soon as he was acquainted who Jesus was by visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and a voice from heaven, he made it his business to dispose the Jews in general, and his own disciples in particular, to receive and reverence him, by testifying everywhere that he was the "Son of God, the Lamb of God who came down from heaven, and spake the words of God, and to whom God had given the Spirit without measure."

The Baptist therefore well knew who Jesus was, and consequently he did not send his disciples to ask this question to solve any doubt in his mind concerning the Saviour of the world.

But it will be demanded, What else could induce the Baptist to ask such a question? To this some answer that he had no other intention than to satisfy his disciples that Jesus was the Messiah so long expected among the Jews, and to engage them to follow a more perfect Master, especially as he himself was now on the point of leaving the world.

This solution is doubtless partly right, but it does not seem to remove the whole difficulty, as it is plain, from the very account recorded by the evangelist, that the question had actually some relation to himself, and therefore we must remove the difficulty by some other method; in order to which it must be remembered that John had been long confined in prison, and being persuaded that it was necessary for him to preach the gospel and prepare men to receive the kingdom of the Messiah, he for that reason, from the very time of his imprisonment, earnestly expected that the Messiah would exert his power to procure his release. But on hearing that Jesus had chosen twelve illiterate fishermen to preach the gospel, and furnished them with miraculous powers in order to enable them to perform so great a work, and that two persons of no consequence were raised from the dead, while he was suffered to remain in prison, he began to think himself neglected, and his services disregarded. He therefore sent two of his disciples to ask him the question, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Not that he entertained any doubt of his being the true Messiah, intending nothing more, by making the demand, but to complain that Jesus had not acted the part which he thought the Messiah should have acted; and that this was really the case seems sufficiently plain from the caution added by our blessed Saviour himself: "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me;" as if he had said, When you have informed your master of what you have seen and heard, tell him that he would do well not to be offended either at the choice of the apostles, or that no miracle has been wrought for his release.

From this circumstance it is evident that impatience on account of his long confinement was the true reason for the Baptist's sending his disciples with this question to Jesus, and that

the purport of the answer was to teach him submission in a case that was plainly above the reach of his judgment.

Lest the people, from this conversation, should imbibe any opinion prejudicial to the character of the Baptist, our blessed Saviour thought proper to place it in a proper point of light. He praised his invincible courage and constancy, which was not to be overcome, or "like a reed to be shaken with the wind:" his austere and mortified life; for he was not "clothed in soft raiment," like those who wait in the palaces of kings; adding that he was "a prophet, nay, more than a prophet: for this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee;" but subjoined, "Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The propriety of this remark will appear when it is considered that though the Baptist excelled all the prophets that were before him, yet the least inspired person in the kingdom of heaven, the least apostle or preacher of the gospel, was greater than he, because, by constantly attending on Jesus, they were much better acquainted with his character, disposition, and doctrine than the Baptist, who had only seen him transiently; wherefore, in respect of their personal knowledge of the Messiah, the apostles greatly excelled the Baptist. They were also employed, not in making preparation for the Messiah's kingdom, but in erecting it, and consequently greater than the Baptist with regard to the dignity of their office. Moreover, by having the gift of miracles, and the like, conferred on them for that office, they were far superior to him with regard to illumination. They were so fully possessed by the Spirit that on all occasions they could declare the will of God infallibly, being as it were living oracles; and having been the subjects of ancient prophecies, they had been long expected by the people of God.

Having thus shown the greatness of the Baptist's character, and wherein he was surpassed by the disciples, our blessed Saviour took occasion from thence to blame the perverseness of the age in rejecting both his own and the Baptist's testimony.

It seems that the scribes and Pharisees, seeing their pretended mortifications eclipsed by the real austerity of the Baptist, impudently affirmed that his living in the desert, his shunning the company of men, the coarseness of his clothing, the abstemiousness of his diet, and the other severities he practised, were the effects of his being possessed by an apostate spirit, or of a religious melancholy. "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil." (Matt. xi. 18.)

On the other hand, they would not listen to the heavenly doctrines preached by Christ because he did not separate himself from society, attributing his free manner of living

to a certain looseness of disposition, though they well knew that he observed the strictest temperance himself, and never encouraged the vices of others, either by dissimulation or example. "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." (Matt. xi. 19.)

He next proceeded to upbraid the several cities where his most wonderful works had been performed. For though they had heard him preach many awakening sermons, and seen him perform many astonishing miracles, such as would have converted Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, cities infamous for their impiety, contempt of religion, pride, luxury, and debauchery, yet so great was their obstinacy, that they persisted in their wickedness, notwithstanding all he had done to convert them from the evil of their ways. "Woe unto thee,

Sidon.

Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works that have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matt. xi. 21, &c.)

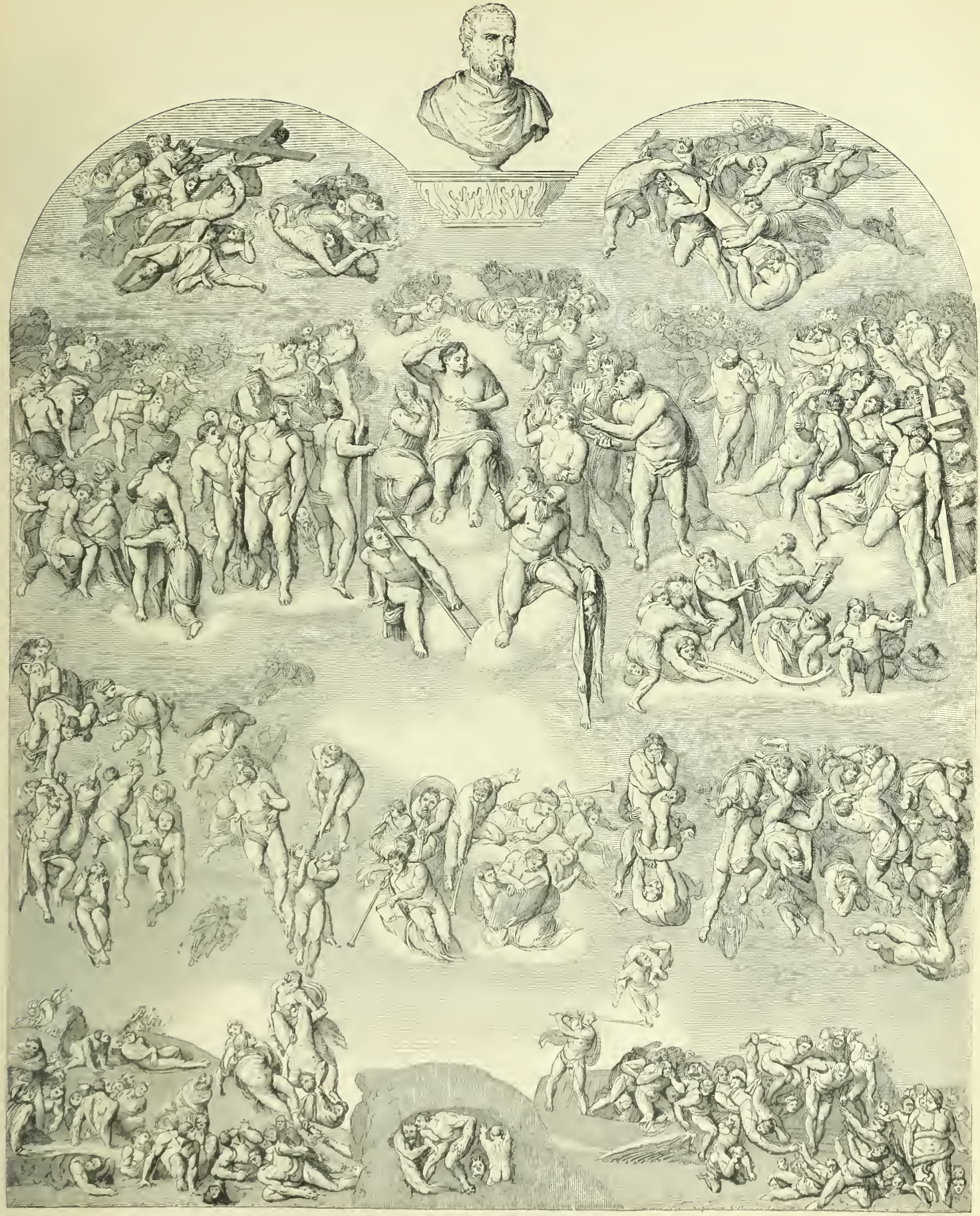
Having denounced these judgments on the cities which had neglected to profit by his mighty works, he concluded his discourse with these heavenly words: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.

and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. xi. 28, &c.)

This affecting invitation must engage the most serious attention and particular regard of every reader, if the greatness of the speaker, the importance of his message, or the affectionate manner of his address have any weight, any force, or any power to affect the soul. It is Christ, the Almighty Redeemer, the Son of the Most High; he into whose hands, as our Mediator, all things are delivered of his Father; he unto whom all power in heaven and earth is given; even he who shall come in the clouds of heaven to judge all the inhabitants of the earth, and even by those words he hath himself delivered: it is this wonderful person who speaks, declaring at once his great willingness to receive, and his own supreme power to give that rest and peace to the soul which is the pursuit of every son of Adam, and is the gift of his religion only. Nor is the invitation less important, containing the whole glad tidings of the gospel to every oppressed and burdened soul. And that nothing may prevent our accepting this benevolent offer, he invites, with the most affectionate tenderness, not the great, the happy, and the powerful, nor the merry-hearted, and the sons of joy, but "all that labour and are heavy laden," all that are under the bondage of sin and sorrow; and those he calls, not with a desire to expose their miseries, to punish their offences, or to display his own glory, but solely with a view to render them happy. "Come," says he, "come to me; I entreat you to come; I will give you rest." I myself will relieve and release you from your heavy burdens: come to me, and you shall find perfect rest and peace to your souls. "Take my yoke upon you, for it is easy; and my burden, for it is light."

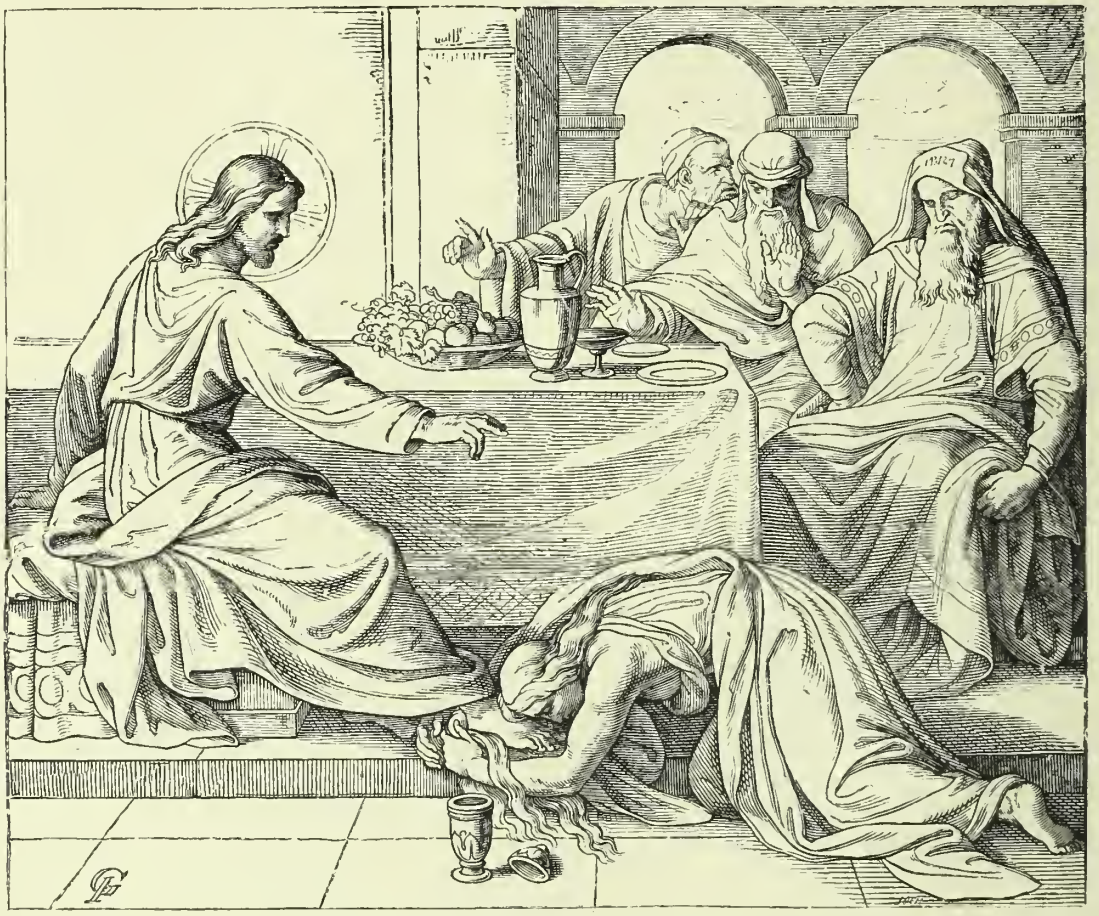
Is it possible that creatures of a day like us—can it be possible that "mortals who have but a short time to live, and are full of misery—who come up and are cut down like a flower—who flee as it were a shadow, and never continue in one stay"—can it be possible that they should reject and disregard a call so full of love, so full of affection, of such infinite consequence, and of such unspeakable advantages? Can they reject the love of him who gave them rest, took their burdens upon himself, and who, after all his sufferings, desires them only to come and exchange their own oppressive burdens for his lightsome yoke; to abandon their sins and sorrows, and become his disciples; to love and obey him, and thence to be happy? Can we possibly despise such grace, refuse such offers, fly from such rest thus freely proposed to us, and prefer the heavy yoke of sin, and the cruel pangs of a wounded conscience?

Having concluded this public address, one of the Pharisees desired he would "eat with him." The



The Coming of Christ. (*Michel Angelo.*)

blessed Jesus accepted the invitation, accompanied him to his house, and sat down to meat. He had not continued long at the table before a woman who had lately left the paths of vice for those of virtue placed herself behind him, and from a deep conviction of her former crimes, and the obligations she owed the Saviour of mankind for bringing her to a sense of them, shed such quantities of tears that they trickled down on his feet, which, according to the custom of the country, were then bare. But observing that her tears had wet the feet of her beloved instructor, she immediately wiped them with the hair of her head, kissed them with



Christ at the House of Simon. (*G. Jäger.*)

the most ardent affection, and anointed them with a precious ointment she had brought with her for that purpose.

It was a custom among the inhabitants of the East to pour fragrant oils on the heads of such guests as they intended particularly to honour while they sat at meat, and probably the woman's original intention was to anoint Jesus in the usual manner. But being exceedingly humbled on account of her former crimes, she could not presume to take such a freedom with him, and therefore poured it on his feet, to express at once the greatness of her love and the profoundness of her humility.

The Pharisee, who had attentively observed the woman, concluded from thence that our Saviour could not be a prophet. "This man," said the Pharisee to himself, "if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." (Luke vii. 39.)

But though Simon spoke this only in his heart, his thoughts were not concealed from the great Redeemer of mankind, who, to convince him that he was a prophet, and that he knew not only the characters of men, but even the secret thoughts of their hearts, immediately conversed with him on the very subject he had been revolving in his mind. He did not, indeed, expose him before the company by relating what he had said in secret, but with remarkable delicacy pointed out to Simon alone the unreasonableness of his thoughts. "Simon," said the blessed Jesus, "I have somewhat to say unto thee. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged;" and then immediately applied this short parable to the subject of the woman, on which the Pharisee had so unjustly reasoned with himself. "Simon," continued our Saviour, "seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." (Luke vii. 40, &c.)

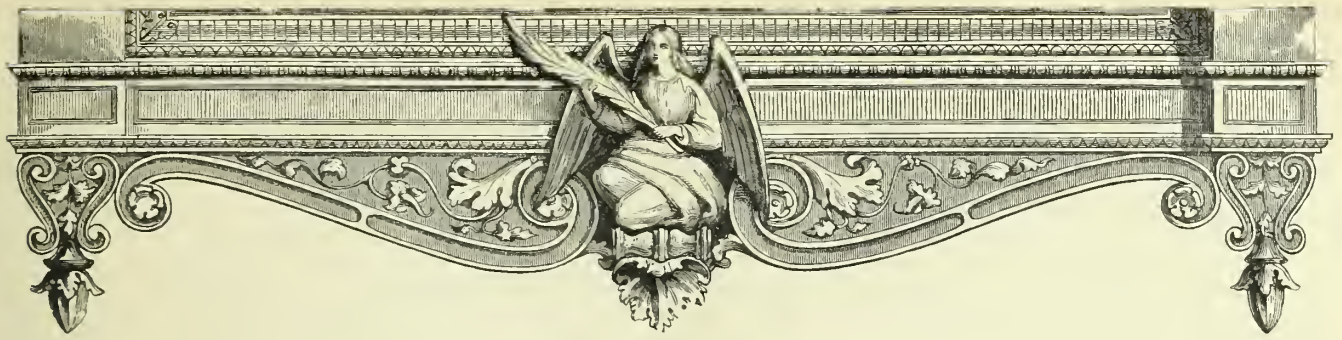
This woman's kind services were in no danger of losing their reward from the blessed Jesus, who possessed the softer and finer feelings of human nature in their utmost perfection. Accordingly he added, in pursuance of the kind invitation he had before made to weary and heavy-laden sinners, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (Luke vii. 47.)

The blessed Jesus, having thus commended the conduct of the woman to the company, and rebuked, with great delicacy, the unjust suspicions of Simon, turned himself to the woman, and in the kindest manner assured her that "her sins were forgiven." But the power he assumed in forgiving sins greatly offended the Jews, who, not being acquainted with his Divinity, considered his speech as derogatory to the honour of the Almighty. Jesus, however, contemned their malicious murmurs, and repeated his assurances, telling the woman that her faith had saved her, and bidding her depart in peace.

The next day Jesus travelled from Capernaum to different parts of Galilee, going "through every village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God;" (Luke viii. 1;) that is, he declared to the people the welcome tidings of the Almighty's being willing to be reconciled to the children of men, on condition of their repentance, and embracing the gospel of the grace of God.

Leaving Galilee, he repaired to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, being the second feast of that kind since his public ministry. In this journey he was accompanied by certain pious women, "who ministered to him of their substance."

A Street in Jerusalem.



CHAPTER XII.

Miraculous cure effected at the pool of Bethesda. Reproof of the superstition of the Jews, in condemning the performance of necessary works on the Sabbath-day. After doing many acts of mercy and wonder, our blessed Lord is visited by his mother and his brethren, and makes a spiritual reflection on that incident.

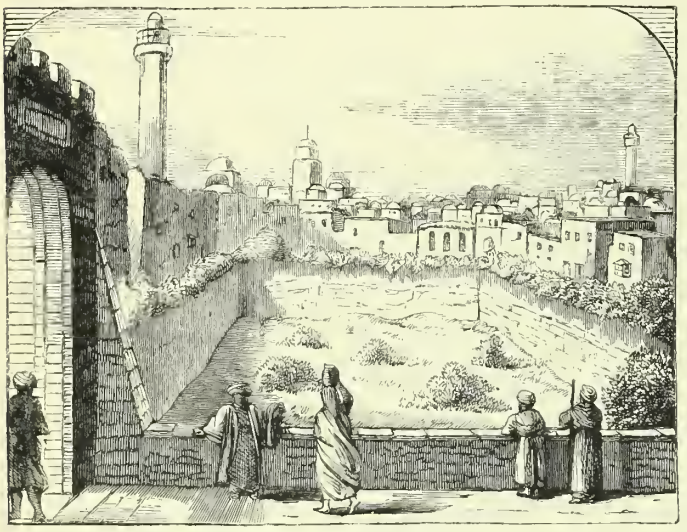
OUR Lord had no sooner entered the ancient city of Jerusalem, so long famous for being the dwelling-place of the Most High, than he repaired to the public bath or pool, called in the Hebrew tongue "Bethesda," that is, "the house of mercy," on account of the miracles wrought there by the salutary effects of the water at certain seasons. This bath was surrounded by five porches or cloisters, in which those who frequented the place were sheltered both from the heat and cold, and were particularly serviceable to the diseased and infirm, who crowded thither to find relief in their afflictions. These porches were now filled with a "great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel descended into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." (John v. 3, 4.)

This is the account of this miraculous pool given us by St. John, the only writer who has mentioned it. Many controversies have arisen concerning the place, the time, and the nature of the pool—questions which will perhaps never be answered, because the pool of Bethesda is not mentioned by any Jewish writer, sacred or profane.

The time when this miraculous effect took place cannot be determined; but it is almost universally agreed that it could not be long before the coming of our Saviour, and that the miracle was intended to lead us to the Son of God. For the gift of prophecy and of miracle had ceased among the Jews for above four hundred years; and therefore, to raise in them a more ardent desire for the coming of the Messiah, and to induce

them to be more circumspect in observing the signs of his coming, God was pleased to favour them with this remarkable sign at Bethesda. And as the descendants of Jacob, in the last times, were very obnoxious not only to the irruptions and tyranny of the Gentiles, but had wholly lost their liberty, so God favoured them with this eminent token of his favour, this wonderful pool, that they might not despair of the promises made to their forefathers being fulfilled.

The pool was situated near the



The Pool of Bethesda.

gate of victims, which were figures of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that they might be convinced God had yet a regard to the posterity of Abraham, and the worship which he himself had established, and might thus support themselves with the pleasing hope of the coming of the Messiah, the great Angel of the Covenant, to his temple.

And as this miracle of the angel descending from heaven began when the coming of the Messiah was at hand, to advise them of the speedy and near approach of that promised salvation, so Christ entered these porches, which were situated without the temple, and performed the miracle I shall presently relate, to indicate what was the true intent of this gift of healing, namely, to lead men to himself, "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness;" and the waters were troubled only at this certain season of the Passover, or at other stated periods, and one only healed each time the angel descended, to show them at once the weakness of the law, and the great difference between that and the Gospel dispensation; and to teach them not to rest satisfied with the corporeal benefit only, as in the ministration of an angel, but to reflect attentively on the promises of the Messiah's approaching advent.

Such remarks I conceived might not be unacceptable to the reader with regard to the celebrated pool, and shall now return to the blessed Jesus, who thought proper to visit the porches of Bethesda, now crowded with persons labouring under divers diseases.

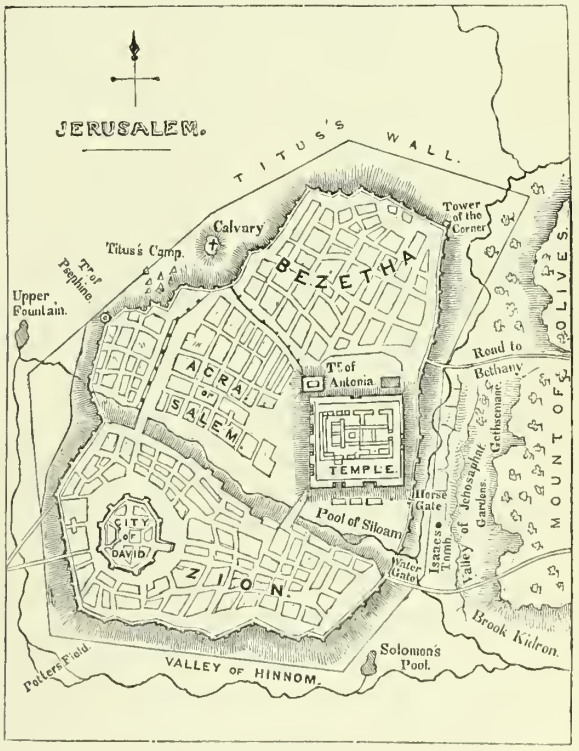
Among these objects of pity was one who had laboured under his infirmity no less than thirty and eight years. The length and greatness of this man's affliction, which were well known to the Son of God, were sufficient to excite his tender compassion, and make him the happy object to demonstrate that his power of healing was infinitely superior to the sanative

virtue of the waters, while the rest were suffered to remain in their affliction.

Had our Lord at this time restored none of them to health, he would have acted contrary to the general account which the evangelists give of his goodness on other occasions, namely, "that he healed all who came to him." For such diseased persons who left their habitations through a persuasion of his power and kindness were proper objects of his mercy; whereas the sick in the cloisters of Bethesda were no more so than the other sick throughout the whole country, whom he could have cured with a single word of his mouth, had he pleased to have uttered it.

Our compassionate Lord now approached the man whom he had singled out as the person on whom to manifest his power. He asked him whether he was desirous of being made whole—a question which must induce the man to declare publicly his melancholy case in the hearing of the multitude, and consequently render the miracle more conspicuous. And as this was done on the Sabbath-day, our blessed Saviour seems to have wrought it to rouse the sons of Jacob from their lethargy, and convince the inhabitants of Jerusalem that the long-expected Messiah was now come, and that "God had actually visited his people."

This distressed mortal, beholding Jesus with a sorrowful countenance, and understanding that he meant his being healed by the sanative virtue of the waters, answered in a plaintive accent, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." (John v. 7.) But the compassionate Redeemer of mankind soon convinced him that he was not to owe his cure to the salutary nature of the waters, but to the unbounded power of the



Plan of Jerusalem.

Son of God, and accordingly said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Nor was the heavenly mandate any sooner uttered than the impotent man, to the astonishment of the multitude, "was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked." (John v. 9.)

This miraculous achievement could not fail of having a proper effect on the spectators; and his carrying his

bed on the Sabbath-day, which the Jews considered as a profanation of that day of rest, tended greatly to spread the fame of the miracle over the whole city. Nor did the man scruple to obey the commands of his kind physician: he well knew that the person who had the power of working such miracles must be a great prophet, and consequently that his injunction could not be sinful. He therefore thought that he gave a sufficient answer to those Jews who told him it was not lawful to carry his bed on the Sabbath-day to say, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." (John v. 11.) He that restored my strength in an instant, and removed with a single word a disease that had many years afflicted me, commanded me, at the same time, to take up my bed and walk; and surely a person endued with such power from on high could not have ordered me to do anything but what is truly right.

The votaries of infidelity should remember that this signal miracle was performed in an instant, and even when the person did not expect any such favour, nor even knew the person to whom he owed it. None, therefore, can pretend that imagination had any share in performing it. In short, the narrative of this miracle of mercy sufficiently proves that the person who performed it was really Divine.

Soon after the miracle was performed Jesus met in the temple the man he had healed at the pool of Bethesda, and took the opportunity of reminding him that, as he was now freed from an infirmity he had brought on himself by irregular courses, he should be careful to abstain from them for the future, lest the Almighty should think proper to afflict him in a more terrible manner. The man, overjoyed at having found the Divine Physician who had relieved him from his melancholy condition, repaired to the scribes and Pharisees, and, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, innocently told them that it was Jesus who had performed on him so astonishing a cure, being doubtless persuaded that they would rejoice at beholding so great a prophet.

But alas! this was far from being the case: the rulers of Israel, instead of being pleased with accounts of his many stupendous works of mercy and kindness, attacked him tumultuously in the temple, and probably carried him before the Sanhedrim, with an intention to take away his life, merely because he had done good on the Sabbath-day.

Jesus, however, soon vindicated, by irrefragable arguments, the propriety of his works, observing that, in performing works of mercy and beneficence on the Sabbath-day, he only imitated his heavenly Father, the God of Jacob, whose providence was continually employed, without any regard to times or seasons, in doing good for the children of men. And surely he must be more than

blind who cannot discover that the Almighty, on the Sabbaths as well as on other days, supports the whole frame of the universe, and, by the invisible operations of his power, continues the motion of the heavenly bodies, on the revolution of which the vicissitudes of day and night, of summer and winter, so necessary to the production of the fruits of the earth, depend.

But the Jewish prejudice could not be overcome by argument. Nay, the very apology increased their malice, as he claimed a peculiar relation to God, and, by asserting that he acted like him, insinuated that he was equal to the Almighty himself.

The Raising of Jairus's Daughter. (*Flaxman, R.A.*)

The Saviour of the world did not deny this conclusion, but showed that he acted agreeably to the will of God, was equal with him in power, doing whatsoever he saw done by his Father—a convincing proof of his Father's love for him: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." (John v. 19, 20.)

The blessed Jesus added that he

had not only power to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead, and that his Father had constituted him the universal Judge of the world; and therefore those who refused to honour him refused to honour the Father, but whoever believed on him should inherit eternal life.

And that they might not doubt of the truth of his mission, but that he was actually invested with the power of raising the dead, he desired them to remember the undoubted instances he had already given of it in restoring the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son of Nain, to life; and consequently that he could, on any future occasion, exert the same power. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." (John v. 25—27.)

The blessed Jesus added to this, Be not surprised at the power of raising a few individuals from the dead, and the authority of inflicting punishment on a small number of the human race; I have a far greater power committed to me, even that of raising all the sons of Adam at the last day, and of judging and rewarding every one of them according to his works. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall come forth: they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." (John v. 28, 29.)

The great day of tribulation will distinguish between the good and the evil, for the tremendous Judge has been privy to all the actions of the sons of men from the beginning to the end of time; nor has he any interest to pursue, or any inclination to satisfy, different from those of his heavenly Father. "And my judgment is true; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of my Father who sent me." (John v. 30.)

Nothing could more evidence the character of our Lord than these assertions, though he did not require his hearers to believe them merely on his own testimony; he appealed to that of John, who was a burning and a shining light, and in whom, for a time, they greatly rejoiced, because the prophetic spirit which had so long ceased in Israel was revived in that holy man. Nay, he appealed to a much greater testimony than that of John, even that of the God of Jacob himself, who was continually bearing witness to the truth of his mission by the many miracles he empowered him to perform, and who, at his baptism, had, in an audible voice from the courts of heaven, declared him to be his beloved Son—a voice which multitudes of people had heard, and probably even some of those to whom he was now speaking.

The Jews had long expected the

Messiah; but they had expected him to appear as a temporal prince, who would not only restore the former lustre of the throne of David, but infinitely augment it, and even place it over all the kingdoms of the earth. And hence they were unwilling to acknowledge Jesus for their Messiah, notwithstanding the proofs of his mission were so undeniable, because they must in so doing have abandoned all their grand ideas of a temporal kingdom. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, desired them to consult their own Scriptures, particularly the writings of the prophets, where they would find the characters of the Messiah displayed, and be fully convinced they were all fulfilled in his person.

He also gave them to understand that the proofs of his mission were as full and clear as possible, being supported by the actions of his life, which in all things agreed with his doctrine; for he never sought the applause of men, or affected secular power, but was always innocent and humble, though he well knew that these virtues made him appear little in the eyes of those who had no idea of a spiritual kingdom, but expected the Messiah would appear in all the pomp of secular authority.

In short, the fatal infidelity of the Jews was principally owing to their pride. They had long filled the minds of the people with grand ideas of the glory and power of the Messiah's kingdom; they had represented him as a potent prince, who was to appear at once adorned with all the ensigns of power; and therefore to have ascribed that august character to a mere teacher of righteousness, destitute even of the ordinary advantages of birth, fortune, and erudition, would have been so plain a confession of their ignorance of the Scriptures as must have exposed them to the ridicule and contempt of the whole people.

Our blessed Saviour added that he himself should not be their own accuser to the God of Jacob for their infidelity, but Moses, their great legislator, in whom they trusted, would join in that unwelcome office; for, by denying him to be the Messiah, they denied the writings of that prophet. "For had ye," added he, "believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John v. 46, 47.)

Thus did the blessed Jesus assert himself to be the Son of God, the great Judge of the whole earth, and the Messiah promised by the prophets; and at the same time gave them such convincing proofs of his being sent from God, that nothing could be said against them.

Convincing as these proofs were, they did not in the least abate the malice of the scribes and Pharisees; for the very next Sabbath, upon his disciples plucking a few ears of corn as they passed through the fields, and eating the grain after rubbing it out in their hands, they again exclaimed against this violation of the Sabbath. But our blessed Saviour soon con-

vinced them of their error by showing, both from the example of David and the constant practice of their own priests, who never omitted the necessary works of the temple on the Sabbath-day, that works of necessity were often permitted, even though they broke a ritual command; that acts of mercy were the most acceptable services to God on any day whatever; that it was inverting the order of things to suppose that "man was made for the Sabbath, and not the Sabbath for the benefit of man;" adding that if the service of the temple should be said to claim a particular dispensation from the law of the Sabbath, he and his disciples,

The Brazen Serpent. (*A. Strähuber.*)

whose business of promoting the salvation of mankind was of equal importance, might justly claim the same exemption, as they were carrying on a much nobler work than the priest who attended on the service of the temple. Thus did our blessed Saviour prove that works of mercy should not be left undone, though attended with the violation of some of the most sacred institutions of the ceremonial law.

Soon after this dispute with the scribes and Pharisees, our blessed Saviour entered one of the synagogues of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day, and found there a man whose right hand was withered.

The Pharisees, who observed the compassionate Jesus advance towards the man, did not doubt but he would attempt to heal him, and therefore watched him attentively, that they might have something to accuse him of to the people. Their hypocrisy was arrived at that monstrous pitch, that they determined to blast his reputation by representing him as a Sabbath-breaker if he dared to heal the man, while they themselves were profaning it by an action which would have polluted any day; namely, that of seeking an opportunity of destroying a person who had never injured them, but who had done many good actions for the sons of Jacob, and was continually labouring for their eternal welfare.

The Saviour of the world was not unapprised of these malicious intentions. He knew their designs, and defied their impotent power by informing them of the benevolent action he designed, though he well knew they would exert every art they were masters of in order to put him to death.

Therefore, when our Saviour ordered the man to show himself to the whole congregation in order to excite their pity, these hypocritical teachers declared, in the strongest terms, the unlawfulness of his performing even such beneficent actions on the Sabbath: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days?" They did not, however, ask this question with an intention to hinder him from performing the miracle. No, they had a very different intention to that of accusing him; for they hoped he would have declared openly that such actions were lawful, or at least make no reply to their demand, which they would have construed into an acknowledgment of what they asserted.

Nor did our Lord fail to expose their malice and superstition, and accordingly asked them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" (Luke vi. 9.) Is it not more lawful for me on the Sabbath-day to save men's lives than for you to seek my death without the least provocation? This was a severe rebuke, and would admit of no answer; they therefore "held their peace," pretending not to understand his meaning. He therefore made use of an argument which stupidity itself could not fail of understanding, and which all the art of these hypocritical sophists was unable to answer. "What man," said the blessed Jesus, "shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days." (Matt. xii. 11, 12.)

The former question they pretended not to understand, and therefore held their peace, but this argument effectually silenced them, though they were determined not to be convinced. This unconquerable obstinacy grieved the spirit of the meek, the benevolent Jesus, who beheld them "with anger,"

that, if possible, an impression might be made either on them or the spectators.

But, at the same time that he testified his displeasure towards the Pharisees, he uttered words of comfort to the lame man, bidding him stretch forth his hand; and he no sooner obeyed the Divine command than "his hand was restored whole, as the other."

This astonishing work, performed in the midst of a congregation, many of whom doubtless knew the man while he laboured under this infirmity, and in the presence of his most inveterate enemies, must certainly have had a great effect on the minds of the people, especially as they saw that it had effectually silenced the Pharisees, who had nothing to offer, either against the miracle itself or the reasonings and power of him who had performed it.

But though these whited sepulchres, as our blessed Saviour justly termed them, were silenced by his arguments and astonished at his miracles, yet they were so far from abandoning their malicious intentions that they joined their inveterate enemies, the Herodians, or Sadducees, in order to consult how they might destroy him, well knowing that, if he continued his preaching and working miracles, the people would wholly follow him, and their own power soon become contemptible. Jesus, however, thought proper to prevent their malicious designs by retiring into Galilee, to the borders of the Lake of Chinnereth.

This retreat could not, however, conceal him from the multitude, who flocked to him from all quarters, bringing with them sick and maimed, who were all healed and sent away in peace. Some of his disciples, however, who still entertained the popular opinion that the Messiah would establish his kingdom by force, and bear down all opposition, were extremely mortified to find their Master retreat from so weak an enemy. But had they read with attention the prophecy of Isaiah, they would have known that this weakness was one part of the Messiah's character. "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust." (Matt. xii. 18, &c.)

Though there are several small variations between this prophecy as quoted by St. Matthew and the original in the book of Isaiah, the sense in both places is the same. And I cannot help observing that there is in this prophecy an evident contrast between the publication of the Jewish religion by Moses and the Christian religion by Christ. The doctrine of salvation, as taught by Moses, extended only to the single nation of the Jews, whereas that published by

the Messiah extends to every nation and people under heaven. Accordingly, our blessed Saviour, by retiring into Galilee, fulfilled the first part of this famous prophecy, "He shall show judgment to the Gentiles;" for the evangelist tells us great multitudes came to him from beyond Jordan, and from Syria, about Tyre and Sidon. (Mark iii. 8.)

Being now returned into Galilee, there was brought to him a blind and dumb man, possessed with a devil; but Jesus with a single word cast out the evil spirit, and restored the noble faculties of sight and speech. A miracle so surprising could not fail of astonishing the numerous spectators, who now seemed convinced that the person endued with such remarkable power could be no other than the Messiah, "the Son of David."

The Pharisees, who were come thither from Jerusalem, filled with malice at seeing him perform so many miracles, impiously asserted, contrary to the conviction of their own minds, that they were wrought by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.

So blasphemous a declaration could not be supposed to escape a censure from the Son of God, who, addressing himself both to them and the people, demonstrated the absurdity of the calumny by an argument drawn from the common affairs of life. "Every kingdom," said the blessed Jesus, "divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?" Your calumny is malicious and absurd: it is malicious, because your own consciences are convinced of its falsehood; and it is absurd, because Satan cannot assist me in preaching the kingdom of God, and destroying all the works of darkness, unless he be divided against himself, and destroying the works of his own kingdom; adding, "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." Ye did not impute the miracles of your prophets to Beelzebub, but received them, on the evidence of these miracles, as the messengers of God; but ye reject me, who work greater and more numerous miracles than they, and impute them to the power of evil spirits. Is this conduct reconcilable? These prophets, therefore, shall be your judges; they shall condemn you. But as it is true that I cast out devils by the assistance of the Almighty, it follows that the kingdom of God, so long expected, is going to be established.

But this blasphemy, however great, may be forgiven you, because stronger and more evident proofs of my mission may convince you of your sins, and induce you to embrace the offers of eternal life. And the time is coming when the Son of man shall be raised

from the dead by the power of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of miracles showered on almost all believers, and the nature of the Messiah's kingdom more fully explained, in order to remove the foundation of your prejudice, the expectation of a temporal prince. But if you then shut your eyes, and speak evil against the Holy Ghost, by affirming that his gifts and miracles proceed from the prince of darkness, it shall never be forgiven you, because it is a sin you cannot possibly repent of, as no greater means of conviction will be offered; but you shall be punished for it, both

Visit of Queen of Sheba to Solomon. (L. Vollinger.)

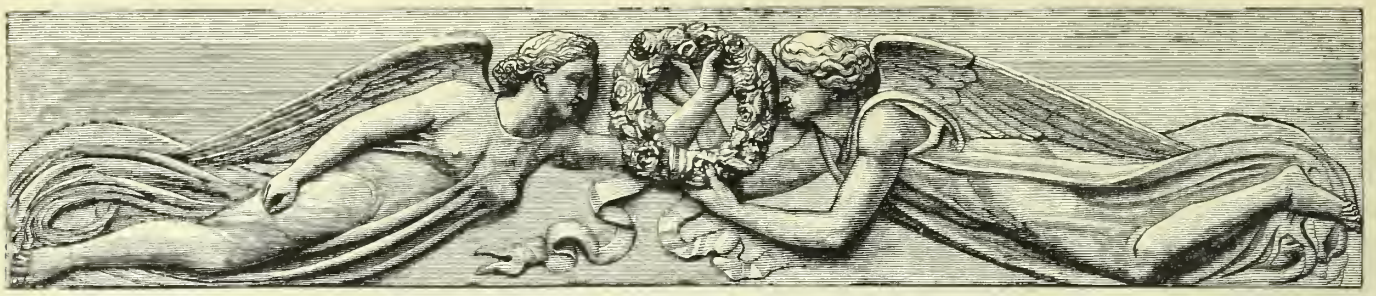
in this world and in that which is to come. "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matt. xii. 31, 32.)

This solemn sentence on the sin against the Holy Ghost was probably now pronounced by our Saviour to

awaken the consciences of the Pharisees by a sense of their danger if they continued in such detestable calumnies, when their own hearts sufficiently told them that they flowed entirely from malice and resentment.

But all his reasonings and threatenings had no effect on this perverse set of mortals, who sarcastically answered, "Master, we would see a sign from thee." Strange stupidity! Had not he the moment before cast out a devil, and restored the faculties of sight and speech to the blind and dumb; cleansed lepers, raised the dead, and even rebuked the tempestuous winds and waves? Were not these signs sufficient to convince the most bigoted mortal? What, therefore, could these stubborn doctors of the law require? Well might the great Saviour of the world call them "a wicked and adulterous generation;" for surely they could boast of no part of the faith and piety of Abraham, their great progenitor. Persons of such incorrigible inclinations certainly merited no indulgence; and accordingly Jesus told them they should have no other sign given them but what they every day beheld—the sign of the prophet Jonas, who, by lying three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was a type of the Son of God, who should continue three days and three nights in the chambers of the tomb; adding that the Ninevites repented at the preaching of the prophet Jonas, and the Queen of the South undertook a long journey to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but they refused to attend to the doctrines of an infinitely greater prophet than Jonas, or listen to one much wiser than Solomon; concluding his discourse with a very apposite parable, tending to show the great danger of resisting conviction and breaking through resolutions, as such actions tended entirely to render men more obdurate and abandoned than before.

During this dispute with the Pharisees, Jesus was informed that his mother and brethren, or kinsmen, were without, desiring to speak to him, upon which the blessed Jesus stretched out his hands towards his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Matt. xii. 49, 50.) This glorious truth should be stamped on the memory of every believer, as it shows that every one, of what nation or kindred soever, that is brought into subjection to the will of God, is allied to the blessed Jesus, and entitled to the salvation of God.



CHAPTER XIII.

Our Lord delivers many remarkable parables, and explains several of them. Returns to Nazareth, and commissions the twelve apostles, whom he had before selected as his constant attendants and followers, to disperse and preach the gospel of the kingdom of God in divers places. After the death of John the Baptist, the apostles return to Nazareth.

THE miraculous power of our blessed Lord, both in performing the most astonishing acts and confuting the most learned of the Pharisaical tribe who endeavoured to oppose his mission and doctrine, brought together so great a multitude that he repaired to the sea-side; and, for the better instructing the people, he entered into a ship, and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Being thus conveniently seated, he delivered many precepts of the utmost importance, beginning with the parable of the sower, who cast his seed on different kinds of soil, the products of which were answerable to the nature of the ground, some yielding a large increase, others nothing at all. By this elegant similitude the blessed Jesus represented the different kinds of hearers, and the different manner in which they are affected by the precepts of religion. Some wholly suppress the doctrines delivered; in others they produce the fruits of righteousness in proportion to the goodness of their hearts. And surely a more proper parable could not have been delivered, when such multitudes came to hear his discourses, and so few practised the precepts or profited by the heavenly doctrines they contained.

To vindicate the propriety of our Saviour's conduct, it may not be amiss here to observe that parables were very familiar to the Oriental nations, particularly those of Palestine, as we learn from the concurrent testimony of all the Eastern writers; and it was the general method, both of the old prophets, John the Baptist, and our blessed Saviour himself, to allude to things present, and such as immediately offered themselves. Our

Saviour also, by using this manner of teaching, fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah relating to his method of instruction, it being foretold "that he should open his mouth in parables, and utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." It is therefore no wonder that the mysteries and secrets of the kingdom of heaven are generally the subjects of our Saviour's parables, his grand and fundamental doctrines being delivered in clear, plain, and express terms, but sometimes heightened and enlivened by the addition of beautiful parables. Similitudes of this kind are, indeed, the most simple method of teaching, and best accommodated to the apprehension of the vulgar and unlearned, and very easy to be remembered, understood, and applied. At the same time, they are the finest veil for mysteries, and the best means of convicting the proud and obstinate, as well as concealing from him those truths which his perverseness and infidelity render him unworthy of having more clearly displayed.

But to return. The parable being finished, his disciples asked why he taught the people in parables, to which he answered, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have in more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I unto them in parables: because in seeing they see not; and in hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." (Matt. xiii. 11, &c.) As if he had said, You, my beloved disciples, who are of an humble, docile temper, and are willing to use means, and resort to me for instruction and the explanation of the truths I deliver, to you it shall be no disadvantage that they are clothed in parables. Besides, my discourses are plain and intelligible to all unprejudiced minds: truth will shine through the veil in which it is arrayed, and the shadow will guide you to the substance. But these proud, these self-conceited Pharisees, who are so blinded by their own prejudices that they will neither hear nor understand a thing plainly delivered, to them I preach in parables, and hide the great truths of the gospel under such metaphorical robes as will for ever conceal them from persons of their temper. They have, therefore, brought upon themselves this blindness, that in seeing they see not; and this wilful deafness, that in hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

The blessed Jesus added that there was no reason for their being surprised at what he had told them, as it had long before been predicted by the prophet Isaiah: "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with

their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matt. xiii. 14, 15.) There is some variation in the words, as quoted by the evangelist and those found in Isaiah; but the import of both is the same, and may be paraphrased in the following manner: "The sons of Jacob shall indeed hear the doctrines of the gospel, but not understand them; and see the miracles by which these doctrines are confirmed, without perceiving them to be wrought by the finger of God: not because the evidences produced by the Messiah are insufficient, but because the corruption of their hearts will not suffer them to examine and weigh these evidences; for the sins of this people have hardened their hearts; their pride and vanity have shut their ears; and their hypocrisy and bigoted adherence to traditions and forced interpretations of the law and the prophets have closed their eyes, lest the brilliant rays of truth should strike their sight with irresistible force, and the powerful voice of Divine wisdom force their attention, and command their assent, being unwilling to be directed to the paths of righteousness which lead to the heavenly Canaan."

Such are the reasons given by our blessed Saviour for his teaching the people by parables; and, to enhance the great privilege his disciples enjoyed, he added that many patriarchs and prophets of old had earnestly desired to see and hear these things which they saw and heard, but were denied that favour, God having till then showed them to his most eminent saints in shadows only, and as they lay brooding in the womb of futurity. "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (Matt. xiii. 16.)

Our Lord, having by these means excited the desire of his disciples, proceeded to explain to them the parable of the sower. "The sower," said he, "soweth the word." The seed, therefore, implies the doctrines of true religion, and the various kinds of soil the various kinds of hearers. The ground by the highway-side, which is apt to be beaten by men treading upon it, is an image of those who have their hearts so hardened with impiety that though they hear the gospel preached, it makes no impression on their callous hearts, because they either hear it inattentively or quickly forget the word of the preacher. And surely no similitude could more strongly represent this insensibility and inattention than the beaten ground bordering on the highway, into which the seed never entering, it is picked up by the fowls of the air, or trodden in pieces by the feet of passengers. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it

not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which is sown in his heart. This is he which received the seed by the way side." (Matt. xiii. 19.) We must not suppose that the devil has the power of robbing hearers of their knowledge by any immediate act of his own, because he is said to catch away the word sown in their hearts, but by the opportunities they give the deceiver of mankind for exerting his strong temptations, and particularly those which have a relation to their commerce with men—a circumstance that could not escape the observation of St. Luke, who tells us that the seed was trodden down, or destroyed, from their own headstrong lusts, which, like so many birds pinched with hunger, devour the seed implanted in their minds.

The rocky ground represents those hearers who so far receive the word into their hearts that it discovers itself by good resolutions, which are perhaps accompanied with a partial reformation of some sins, and the temporary practice of some virtues. But the word has not sunk deep enough in their minds to remain constantly there; its abode with them is only for a season; and therefore, when persecution ariseth for the sake of the gospel, and such hearers are exposed to tribulations of any kind, the blade which sprung up, quickly withers for want of being watered with the streams of piety and virtue, like the vegetable productions of the earth when deprived of the enlivening rains and dews of heaven, and a want of earth to contain this balmy fluid when the rays of the sun dart in full vigour upon them. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: so when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by-and-by he is offended." (Matt. xiii. 20, 21.)

The ground encumbered with thorns, which sprung up with the seed and choked it, represents all those who receive the word into hearts already filled with the cares of this world, which will, sooner or later, destroy whatever good resolutions are raised by the word. The cares of the world are compared to thorns, not only because of their pernicious tendency to choke the word, but because they cannot be eradicated without great pain and difficulty. In the parable the hearers of this denomination are distinguished from those who receive the seed on stony ground, not so much by the effect of the word upon their minds as by the different natures of each; for in both the seed sprang up, but brought forth no fruit. Those represented by the stony ground have no depth of soil; but those by the thorny ground, choked by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the love of pleasures, which, sooner or later, stifle the impressions of the word, by which means they at last

become as unfruitful as the former. But both are distinguished from those hearers represented by the seed sown by the highway-side, inasmuch as they receive the word, and in some measure obey its precepts; whereas the first never receive the word at all, hearing without attention; or, if they do attend, forget it immediately. "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." (Matt. xiii. 22.)

In opposition to these unprofitable hearers of the word, others are represented whose goodness of heart, represented under the similitude of the soil, receive the word with gladness, and bring forth larger increase. These are convinced of the truths delivered, and practise it, though contrary to their prejudices, and opposite to their inclination. All those bring forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty, in proportion to the different degrees of strength in which they possess the graces necessary to the profitable hearing the word of righteousness.

Having ended this interpretation of the parable of the sower, he continued his discourse to his disciples, explaining to them, by the similitude of a lighted lamp, the use they were expected to make of all the excellent instructions they had and should receive from him. Their understanding, he told them, was to illuminate the world, as a brilliant lamp placed in the centre of an apartment enlightens the whole. He added that though some of the doctrines of the gospel were then concealed from the people because of their prejudices, yet the time would come when these doctrines should be preached openly and plainly through the world; and therefore it was their duty, to whom God had given both an opportunity of hearing and a capacity of understanding these doctrines, to listen with the utmost attention. "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." (Mark iv. 21—23.)

But as it was a matter of great importance that the disciples, who were to publish the gospel throughout the whole world, should listen with the closest attention to his sermons, he repeated his admonition, adding that their present privileges and future rewards should be both proportioned to the fidelity and care with which they discharged the important trust committed to them. "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given." (Mark iv. 24.)

Having explained these parables to his disciples, he turned himself to the multitude on the shore, and in his usual endearing accent delivered the parable of the enemy's sowing

tares among the wheat, and on their first appearance astonishing the husbandman's servants, who knew the field had been sowed with good seed; and, in order to free the wheat from such injurious plants, proposed to root them up. But this the husbandman absolutely refused, lest by extirpating the one they injured the other, adding that he would take care, at the time of harvest, to give orders to

Wheat.

his reapers that they first gathered the tares into bundles, and burned them, and afterwards carried the wheat to his granaries. "The kingdom of heaven," said the blessed Jesus, "is likened to a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He saith unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of

Tares.

harvest I will say unto the reapers, Gather ye the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." (Matt. xiii. 24, &c.) This parable of the tares being ended, he spake another concerning the seed which sprang up secretly, representing the gradual and silent progress of the gospel among the sons of men. He informed them, under this similitude, that the husbandman does not by any efficacy of

his own cause the seed he casts into the ground to grow, but leaves it to be nourished by the teeming virtues of the soil and the enlivening rays of the sun. In the same manner Jesus and his apostles, having taught men the doctrine of true religion, were not by any miraculous force to constrain their wills, far less by the terrors of fire and sword to interpose visibly in the assistance of it, but suffer it to spread by the secret influences of the Holy Spirit, till it attained its full effect. And as the husbandman cannot, by the most diligent observation, perceive the corn in the field extending its dimensions as it grows, so the ministers of Christ were not, at the first planting of the gospel, to expect to see it make a quick progress through the world.

The Mustard Seed.

The ministers of religion must not, however, from hence imagine that religion will flourish without their carefully and importunately pressing its precepts upon the minds of their hearers. The parable was spoken to inform the Jews in particular that neither the Messiah nor his servants would employ force to establish the kingdom of God, as they vainly expected the Messiah would have done, and to prevent the disciples from fainting when they saw that an immediate and rapid success did not attend their labours. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself; first the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." (Mark iv. 26, &c.)

The next parable he spake to the multitude was that of the mustard seed, which, though very small when sown, becomes, in Palestine and other parts of the East, a large spreading tree; intimating to his audience, under this similitude, that notwithstanding the gospel would at first appear contemptible from the ignominy flowing from the crucifixion of its Author, the difficulty of its precepts, the weakness of the persons by whom it was preached, and the small number and mean condition of those who received it, yet, being founded on truth itself, it would increase to an astonishing magnitude, filling the whole earth, and affording spiritual nourishment to persons of all nations,

who should enjoy all the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom equally with the Jews. And surely a more proper parable could not have been uttered to encourage his disciples to persevere in the work of the ministry, notwithstanding it would in the beginning be opposed by the learned, the rich, and the powerful. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." (Matt. xiii. 31, 32.)

Our blessed Saviour concluded his discourse to the multitude with the parable of the leaven, to intimate the influence of the doctrine of the gospel on the minds of particular persons. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." (Matt. xiii. 33.)

While Jesus was thus employed in his heavenly Father's business, his mother and brethren came a second time, desiring to see him. In all probability they feared that the continued fatigue of preaching would injure his health, and were therefore desirous of taking him with them, that he might refresh himself. But the blessed Jesus, who was never weary of doing good, answered his indulging parent as before: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." (Luke viii. 21.)

Night approaching, Jesus dismissed the multitude, and returned to the house in Capernaum where he abode, and there explained to his disciples the parable of the tares in the field. The husbandman, our blessed Saviour, is the Son of man; the field, the Christian church planted in different parts of the world. The wheat are those Christians who obey the precepts of the gospel, and are supported by the influences of the Holy Spirit; and the tares, the bad Christians seduced into the paths of vice by the temptations of the devil. Our blessed Lord, therefore, by this parable, represented the mixed nature of the church on earth, the dismal end of the hypocrites, and those who forget God; for though they may deceive for a time by assuming the robes of virtue and religion, yet they will not fail, sooner or later, to betray themselves, and show that they are only wolves in sheep's clothing. At the same time, however sincerely we may wish to see the church freed from her corrupted members, we must not extirpate them by force, lest, being deceived by outward appearance, we also destroy the wheat, or sound members. We must leave this distinction to the awful day when the great Messiah will descend to judgment; for then a final separation will be made, the wicked cast into torments that will never have an end, but the righteous received into life eternal, where they "shall shine forth

as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. xiii. 43.)

Our Lord on this occasion delivered the parables of the treasure hid in the field, and of the pearl of great price. The former was designed to teach us that some meet with the gospel as it were by accident, and without seeking after it, agreeable to the prediction of the prophet, that God is found of them that seek him not. (Isaiah lxv. 1.) But, with regard to the latter, it was intended to intimate that men sometimes take the utmost pains to become acquainted with the great truths of the gospel. And surely the similitudes both of the treasure and pearl are very naturally used to signify the gospel—the former as it enriches all who possess it, and the latter because it is more precious than rubies.

But that the disciples must expect that the Christian church would consist of a mixed multitude of people, the good blended with the bad in such a manner that it would be difficult to separate them, he compared it to a net cast into the sea, which gathered fish of every kind, good and bad, which were separated when the net was drawn to land; that is, at the last great day of accounts, when the righteous will be conveyed to life eternal, and the wicked cast into everlasting misery.

Our blessed Saviour, having finished these parables, asked his disciples if they understood them; and, upon their answering in the affirmative, he added that every teacher of the gospel ought to resemble a person whose house was completely furnished, and brought "forth out of his treasure things new and old." (Matt. xiii. 52.)

Soon after Jesus left Capernaum, and repaired to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and preached in the synagogue the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; but his townsmen, though astonished at his doctrine, could not overcome the prejudices they had conceived against him on account of the meanness of his family, and thence refused to own him for the Messiah. Our Saviour, finding them the same incorrigible persons as when he visited them before, departed from them, and taught in the neighbouring villages. They, in common with all the Jews, were strangers to the true character of the Messiah, whom they considered as a temporal prince, and therefore could not bear that a person so mean as Jesus appeared to be should perform works peculiar to that idol of their vanity, a glorious, triumphant, secular Messiah.

While our Lord resided in the neighbourhood of Nazareth he sent out his disciples to preach in different parts of Galilee, and to proclaim the glad tidings that God was then going to establish the kingdom of the Messiah, wherein he would be worshipped in spirit and in truth. And in order that they might confirm the doctrines they delivered, and prove that they had received their commission from the Son of God,

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John the Baptist

they were endowed with the power of working miracles. How long they continued their preaching cannot be known, but it is reasonable to think they spent a considerable time in it, preaching in several parts of Judea.

The miracles which the apostles wrought raised the expectations of men higher than ever. The people were astonished to see the disciples of Jesus perform so many miracles; and they concluded that our Saviour must be greater than any of the old prophets, who could not transmit the power they enjoyed to any other. This extraordinary circumstance could not fail of spreading his fame through the whole country; it even reached the ears of Herod Antipas, who, fearing a person of such extraordinary abilities, was very uneasy, which some of his courtiers observing, endeavoured to remove, telling him that one of the old prophets was risen from the dead; but this did not satisfy him, and he declared that he believed it was John the Baptist risen from the dead. "And he said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." (Matt. xiv. 2.)

The evangelist, having on this account mentioned John the Baptist, informs us that Herod had put him to death; but when this happened is uncertain.

It has already been observed that Herod had cast John into prison for his boldness in reproving him for the adulterous commerce in which he lived with his brother's wife. The sacred writers have not told us how long he continued in prison; but it is plain from his two disciples, who came from him to our Saviour, that his followers did not forsake him in his melancholy condition. Nay, Herod himself both respected and feared him, knowing that he was highly and deservedly beloved by the people: he consulted him often, and in many things followed his advice. But Herodias, his brother's wife, with whom he lived in so shameful a manner, being continually uneasy lest Herod should be prevailed upon to set him at liberty, sought all opportunities to destroy him; and at last an incident happened which enabled her to compass her intentions.

The king having, on his birthday, made a great feast for his friends, she sent her daughter Salome, whom she had by Philip, her lawful husband, into the saloon, to dance before the king and his guests. Her performance was remarkably elegant, and so charmed Herod that he promised with an oath to give her what she asked.

Having obtained so remarkable a promise, she ran to her mother, desiring to know what she should ask, and was instructed by that wicked woman to require the head of John the Baptist. Her mother's desire doubtless surprised Salome, as she could not possibly see the motive for asking what could be of no use to

her. But Herodias would take no denial, peremptorily insisting on her demanding the head of the Baptist. Accordingly she turned to Herod, saying, "I will that thou give me by-and-by in a charger the head of John the Baptist."

So cruel a request thrilled every breast. The gaiety of the king was vanished; he was vexed and con-

Herodias with the Head of John the Baptist. (*Guido.*)

founded; but being unwilling to appear either rash, fickle, or false before a company of the first persons of the kingdom for rank and character, he commanded the head to be given her, not one of the guests having the courage to speak a single word in behalf of an innocent man, or attempt to divert him from his mad purpose, though he gave them

an opportunity of doing it by signifying to them that he performed his oath merely out of regard to the company. Thus Herod, through a misplaced regard to his oath and his guests, committed a most unjust and cruel action—an action that will for ever brand his memory with dishonour, and render his very name detestable to the latest posterity.

Soon after the command was given, the head of that venerable prophet, whose rebukes had struck Herod with awe in his loosest moments, and whose exhortations had often excited him to virtuous actions, was brought, pale and bloody, in a charger, and given to the daughter of Herodias in the presence of all the guests.

The young lady eagerly received the bloody present, and carried it to her mother, who enjoyed the whole pleasure of revenge, and feasted her eyes with the sight of her enemy's head, now silent and harmless. But she could not silence the voice of the Baptist; it became louder, filling the earth and heavens, and publishing to every people and nation this woman's baseness and adultery

Thus fell this great and good man, John the Baptist, who was proclaimed by our blessed Saviour himself to be "more than a prophet." Josephus tells us that his whole crime consisted in exhorting the Jews to the love and practice of virtue; and, in the first place, to piety, justice, and regeneration, or newness of life—not by the bare abstinence from this or that particular sin, but by an habitual purity of mind and body.

It may not be improper on this occasion to hint that the history of this birthday, transmitted to posterity in the Scriptures, stands a perpetual beacon to warn the great, the gay, and the young to beware of dissolute mirth. Admonished by so fatal an example, they should be careful to maintain, in the midst of their jollity, an habitual recollection of spirit, lest reason at any time, enervated by the pleasures of sense, should slacken the rein of wisdom, or let it drop, though only for a moment, because their headstrong passions, ever impatient of control, may catch the opportunity, and rush with them into follies whose consequences will be unspeakably, perhaps eternally, bitter.

CHAPTER XIV.

Our Lord adds to the confirmation of his mission and doctrine by working a miracle in the wilderness of Bethsaida. The people, struck with the power and grace of the blessed Jesus, propose to raise him to the earthly dignity of king. Peter, by means of his blessed Master, performs a miracle in walking upon the sea. Our Lord's improvement of the miracle wrought in the wilderness, introduced in a discourse delivered in the synagogue of Capernaum.

THE disciples were so alarmed at the cruel fate of the Baptist, whose memory they highly revered, that they returned from their mission, and assisted in performing the last offices to the body of their old master, many of the apostles having been originally disciples of John. As soon as these pious rites were over they repaired to Jesus, and told him all that had happened.

Their compassionate Master, on hearing this melancholy news, retired with them, by sea, into a desert place belonging to Bethsaida, that by retirement, meditation, and prayer they might be refreshed and recruited for their spiritual labours, and at the same time leave an example to us that we should often retire from the noise and hurry of the world, and offer up the most fervent prayers to our heavenly Father.

But the multitude attended so closely that their departure was not long concealed, and great numbers of people repaired to the place where they supposed Jesus and his disciples had secluded themselves. Struck with the greatness of his miracles on those that were sick, and anxious to hear more instructions from the mouth of so divine a teacher, no difficulties were too great for them to surmount, no place too retired for them to penetrate in search of their admired preacher.

Nor was the beneficent Saviour of the world regardless of their pious esteem. He saw them; he was "moved with compassion" towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, multitudes of people without a pastor, a large har-

vest without labourers—motives abundantly sufficient to excite compassion in the Son of God.

The situation of those numerous throngs of people scattered abroad without a guide, without a guardian, and large stock of defenceless sheep without a single shepherd to defend them from the jaws of the infernal wolf, was truly deplorable. The blessed Jesus, therefore, that "good shepherd who came to lay down his life for the sheep," was moved with pity towards them. The same pity which brought him from the courts of heaven for the sake of his lost and wandering sheep in the desert, now brought him to this multitude of people, whom he instructed in the doctrines of eternal life, and, with his usual goodness, healed all the sick among them.

Intentionally devoted to teaching and healing the people, our blessed Saviour did not perceive the day to wear away, and that the greatest part of it was already spent; but his disciples, too anxious about the things of this world, thought proper to advise him of it—as if the Son of God wanted any directions from man. The day, said the disciples, is now far advanced, and the place a solitary desert, where neither food nor lodging can be procured; it would therefore be convenient to dismiss the people, that they may repair to the towns or villages on the borders of the wilderness, and provide themselves with food and lodging, for they have nothing to eat.

But our Lord prevented that trouble by telling them that there was no necessity for sending the people away to procure victuals for themselves, as they might satisfy the hunger of the multitude by giving them to eat; and at the same time, to prove what opinion his disciples entertained of his power, addressed himself to Philip, who was well acquainted with the country, and said, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

Philip, astonished at the seeming impossibility of procuring a supply for so great a multitude with the small sum of money which he knew was their all, and forgetting the extent of his Master's power, answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." (John vi. 6.)

Our blessed Saviour might now have put the same question to Philip that he did on another occasion: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" (John xiv. 9.) Hast thou beheld so many miracles, and art still ignorant that I can supply food not only for this people, but for all the sons of men, and for "the cattle upon a thousand hills?"

But he contented himself with answering, "Give ye them to eat." The twelve, not yet comprehending the design of their Master, repeated the objection of Philip, but added that they were willing to expend their whole stock in order to procure as large a supply as possible. "Shall

we go," said they, "and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, that they may eat?"

But this was by no means the design of their great Master, who, instead of making a direct answer to their question, asked them, "How many loaves have ye?" How much provision can be found among this multitude? Go and see.

The disciples obeyed the command of their Master, and Andrew soon returned to inform him that the whole stock amounted to no more than five barley loaves and two small fishes—a quantity so inconsiderable that it scarcely deserved notice. "What are they," said this disciple, "among so many?" What, indeed, would they have been among such a multitude of people, if they had not been distributed by the creating hand of the Son of God?

Jesus, notwithstanding the smallness of the number, ordered them to be brought to him, and immediately commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, with which the place abounded, directing his disciples at the same time to range them in a regular order, by hundreds and fifties in a company, each company forming a long square, containing a hundred in rank, and fifty in file, that the number might be more easily ascertained, and the people the more regularly served.

In obedience to his command, the people sat down in the manner they were ordered, big with the expectation of what this uncommon preparation portended, while the great Master of the banquet stood ready to supply the necessities of all his guests: a banquet which, though they had no canopy but the azure sky, no table but the verdant turf, where their food was only coarse barley bread and dried fishes, and their drink only water from a bubbling fountain, yet displayed more real grandeur, by the presence of the Divine Master of it, than the royal feast of gorgeous Ahasuerus, or the splendid entertainment of the imperious Nebuchadnezzar.

The multitude being seated, Jesus took the loaves and fishes into his hands in the sight of all the people, that they might be convinced of the small quantity of provisions that were then before them, and that they could only expect to be fed by his supernatural power. But that hand which has constantly sustained nature could now easily multiply these five loaves and two fishes; for, as the psalmist elegantly observes, "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness." Accordingly, he looked up to heaven, and returned thanks to God, the liberal giver of all good things, for his infinite beneficence in furnishing food for all flesh, and for the power he had conferred on him of relieving mankind by his miracles, particularly for that he was about to work. This done, he blessed them; and so peculiarly efficacious was his blessing, that these five barley loaves and two fishes were multiplied into a quantity sufficient

to supply the wants of five thousand men, besides women and children, who, on the most favourable supposition, must amount to an equal number. "And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." (John vi. 11.)

Thus did the compassionate and powerful Redeemer feed at least ten thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fishes, giving a magnificent proof both of his power and goodness; for, after all had eaten and were satisfied, they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces of meat—a much larger quantity than was first set before our Lord to divide.

Miraculous work! But what is too hard for God? what is impossible to Omnipotence? Strange perverseness of the sons of men, that after such manifestations of Almighty power, they should incredulously doubt, or impiously distrust the providence and fatherly care of this Sovereign, this infinitely gracious Being, into whose hands the Father hath delivered this world and all its concerns! We are his by right of creation and redemption, and him we are bound to serve; and blessed are they who have so kind a Master, so compassionate a Father!

The literal account of this miracle, as recorded by the several evangelists, is very plain as well as circumstantial; and it is remarkable that the circumstance of the place and time tended to magnify its greatness. The place was a desert, where there was no possibility of procuring any sustenance. Had he done this mighty work in any of the towns or villages round about, the Pharisees in those days, and the infidels in ours, might have objected that he had received secretly some supplies, but this in the present case was impossible. The time was the evening; the people had been all the day fasting, and consequently were ready for their meal. Had it been done in the morning, they might have said, either that the people had been just refreshed, or were not hungry, and consequently the miracle not great. But the time and place wholly removed all objections of this kind, and proved beyond a possibility of doubt that "God can furnish a table in the wilderness."

We should learn from this mighty miracle to remember that it is this Divine Lord, this Son of the Father, who every year blesses mankind with plentiful supplies of everything necessary; it is this Lord who, in the emphatical words of David, visiteth the earth and blesseth it; who maketh it very plenteous; who watereth her furrows, and sendeth rain into the little valleys thereof; who maketh it soft with showers, and blesseth the increase of it: who crowneth the year with his goodness, while his clouds drop fatness; making the valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing; (Ps. lxv. 9, 10;)

whose beneficent hand and liberal bounty call for all their praise, and claim all their thankfulness. For, however inattentively we may behold this mighty work of Omnipotence, it is no less a miracle that our Lord should every day support and feed the whole race of mankind, and all the creatures of his hand, than that Christ should feed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes; for what proportion does five thousand bear to those myriads of men who are daily fed from the fruits of the earth, the increase of which is equally a miracle with the increase of the bread and loaves by the blessing of Jesus? How small is the seed sown when compared with the produce! It is carried out in handfuls, and brought home in sheaves; and who can tell by what secret operations this wonderful effect is wrought? Nature is equally wonderful in all her works, as in this particular; and the Divinity, to an attentive observer, equally visible in these regular productions, as in miraculous supplies afforded; equally seen in the wine produced from the moisture of the earth filtrated through the branches of the vine, as in that instantaneously made from water at the marriage in Cana; equally seen in the corn gradually ripened and made into bread for the support of all mankind, as in the bread miraculously blessed to the support of the five thousand. But the constant repetitions of these surprising operations render them common, and, being common, are less observed. Our heavenly Father, therefore, condescends to deviate from the common order of things to rouse and awaken our attention. But if we are dead and utterly inattentive to the works of God in nature, where we see the Divine magnificence and bounty so visibly, so richly displayed, there is too much reason to fear that outward miracles will not now awaken us. We are, however, apt to deceive ourselves in this respect, and are frequently led to conclude that, had we been present at so stupendous a miracle as that we are contemplating, we should have adored the Divine Hand that wrought it, and never have forsook the blessed Jesus. But, alas! if all the displays of his Divine power in the works of creation; if all the evidences of his Omnipotence; if the continual supplies of his bounty, and the most legible characters of his adorable love, written upon all the creatures of his hand, will not elevate our grateful and rejoicing hearts to him, there is great reason to fear that, had we seen the blessed Jesus feed five thousand men with five barley loaves and two small fishes—had we ourselves been partakers of this miraculous banquet, we should have acted like many who really enjoyed these privileges, and have turned away at some of his hard sayings, "and walked no more with him."

But to return to our main design. The people, when they had seen the Saviour of the world perform so stupendous a miracle, were astonished above measure, and, in the height of

their transport, proposed to take Jesus by force and make him a king, concluding that he must then assume the title of the Messiah, whose coming they had so long earnestly expected, and under whose reign they hoped to enjoy all kinds of temporal felicities.

But our Lord, well knowing the intentions of the multitude, and the inclinations of his disciples to second them, ordered the latter to repair immediately to their boat, and sail for Bethsaida, while he sent away the former. They would, it seems, gladly have detained the people, with whom they fully agreed in sentiment, and even lingered till he constrained them to get into the boat; so fully were they still possessed that their Master was to take the reins of government, and become a powerful prince over the house of Jacob.

The people suffered the disciples to depart without the least remorse, as they saw that Jesus did not go with them.

Perhaps they imagined he was sending them away to provide such things as they had need of in the expedition. Nor did they refuse to disperse when he commanded them, proposing to return in the morning, as we find they actually did.

Having thus sent the disciples and the multitude away, Jesus repaired himself to a summit of a mountain, spending the evening in heavenly contemplations and ardent prayers to his Almighty Father.

But the disciples, meeting with a contrary wind, could not continue their course to Bethsaida, which lay about two leagues to the northward of the desert mountain where the multitudes were miraculously fed. They, however, did all in their power to land as near that city as possible, and were tossed up and down all night by the tempest, so that at the conclusion of the fourth watch, or five o'clock in the morning, they were not above a league from the shore.

Their Divine Master beheld from the mountain the dilemma in which they were; but they were ignorant of his presence, though he was now coming to their relief. From hence we should learn, when the stormy billows of affliction assault and seem ready to overwhelm us, not to despair of relief; for he beholds every particular of our distress, and hath not "forgotten to be gracious," but will surely come to our relief, and work our deliverance in a manner altogether unexpected. He often calms the storm of affliction that surrounds us, and commands the bellowing waves of distress to subside. Human wisdom, indeed, is often at a loss; it can discover no hopes of deliverance, nor see any way to escape; but he can easily effect the one, or point out the other.

Such was the state of the disciples: they were tossed by boisterous waves, and opposed in their course by the rapid current of the wind, so that all hopes of reaching the place intended were vanished, when, behold, their heavenly Master, to assist them in this distressful situation, comes to

them, walking on the foaming surface of the sea!

Their Lord's approach filled them with astonishment: they took him for one of the apostate spirits, and shrieked for fear. Their terrors were, however, soon removed: their great and affectionate Master talked to them, with the sound of whose voice they were perfectly acquainted. "Be of good cheer," said the blessed Jesus; "it is I; be not afraid."

Peter, a man of a warm and forward temper, beholding Jesus walking on the sea, was exceedingly amazed, and conceived the strongest desire of being enabled to perform so wonderful an action. Accordingly, without the least reflection, he immediately begged that his Master would bid him come to him on the water. He did not doubt but that Jesus would gratify his request, as it sufficiently intimated that he would readily undertake anything, however difficult, at the command of his Saviour. But it appeared that his faith was too weak to support him to that height of obedience to which he would have willingly soared. To convince this forward disciple of the weakness of his faith, and render him more diffident of his own strength, our blessed Saviour granted Peter his request. He ordered him to come to him on the water.

Peter joyfully obeyed his Divine Master; he left the boat, and walked on the surface of the sea. But the wind increasing, made a dreadful noise, and the boisterous waves at the same time threatened every moment to overturn him. His faith now staggered; his presence of mind forsook him; he forgot that his Saviour was at hand; and, in proportion as his faith decreased, the waters yielded and he sunk. In this extremity he looked around for his Master, and, on the very brink of being swallowed up, cried, "Lord, save me!" His cry was not disregarded by his compassionate Saviour. He "stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. xiv. 31.)

Peter was convinced before he left the ship that it was Jesus who was coming to them on the water; nor did he even doubt it when he was sinking, because he then implored his assistance. But when he found the storm increase, and the billows rage more horribly than before, his fears suggested that either his Master would be unable or unwilling to support him amidst the frightful blasts of the tempest. His fears were, therefore, both unreasonable and culpable: unreasonable, because the same power that had enabled him to walk on the surface of the deep was abundantly sufficient to support him there, notwithstanding all the horrors of the storm; culpable, because he considered his Master as unable to preserve him, or that he paid no regard to his promise, for Jesus had virtually promised him his assistance when he granted his petition. This circumstance should teach us not to

be presumptuous and self-sufficient; not to rush on dangers, and fly in the face of opposition, unless there is a necessity for so doing. We should never refuse to undertake any action, however difficult, when the cause of Christ calls upon us, or abandon the paths of virtue from a fear of the resentment of the children of this world; but we should, at the same time, be careful not to go further than necessity obliges us, lest, like Peter, we repent our own temerity.

This miracle alarmed the disciples, for though they had so very lately seen the miracle of the five loaves, they do not seem to have before formed a proper idea of his power; but, being now fully convinced that he could be no other than the expected Messiah, they "came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." (Matt. xiv. 33.)

Our Saviour seems to have confirmed this miracle by working another; for the evangelists tell us that he had no sooner entered into the ship and hushed the horrors of the storm than they arrived at the place whither they were going. "Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." (John vi. 21.)

When our Lord disembarked, the inhabitants of the neighbouring country ran to him, bringing with them all those that were sick; and they were all healed. It should be remembered that though Jesus ordinarily resided in the neighbourhood of Capernaum, yet he had been absent ever since his visiting Nazareth; and therefore it is natural to think that the inhabitants, on his return, would not omit the opportunity of bringing their sick in such crowds that it was impossible for Jesus to bestow particular attention on each of them; and this was the reason for their beseeching him "that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." (Matt. xiv. 36.)

The virtue or power by which he wrought these things lay not in his garment, for then the soldiers who seized him at his crucifixion might have wrought the same miracles, but because Jesus willed it to be so. It was now the acceptable time, the day of salvation, foretold by Isaiah, and Christ's volition was sufficient to remove any distemper whatsoever.

It has been mentioned that our blessed Saviour, after miraculously feeding the people, ordered them to disperse, and retire to their places of abode.

The former command they obeyed; but, instead of complying with the latter, they stayed in the neighbourhood of the desert mountain, and, observing that no boat had come thither since the disciples left their Master, concluded that Jesus still continued in that place, and had no design of leaving his attendants. And hence they were persuaded that though Jesus had modestly declined the honour of being made a king, he would accept it the next day, especially as they might fancy his disciples

were despatched to the other side with no other intention than to prepare everything necessary for that purpose. Hopes like these animated them to continue in this solitary wilderness, and take up their lodgings in the caverns of the rocks and mountains, notwithstanding their difficulties were greatly increased by the raging of the storm.

But no sooner did the cheering rays of light appear than the multitude left their retreat, and searched for Jesus in every part of the mountain, to the summit of which they had seen him retire. Finding their search in vain, they concluded that he must have departed for the other side in some boat belonging to Tiberias, which had been forced by the storm to take shelter in a creek at the foot of the mountain. Accordingly, they repaired to Capernaum, where they found him in the synagogue teaching the people, and could not help asking him, with some surprise, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" (John vi. 25.)

To this question our Lord replied that they did not seek him because they were convinced by his miracles of the truth of his mission, but because they hoped to be continually fed in the same miraculous manner as before. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." These are the views which induce ye to follow me; but ye are entirely mistaken, for happiness does not consist in the meat that perisheth, nor is it that sort of meat ye must expect to receive from the Messiah. Mere animal foods, which please and delight the body only, are not the gifts he came down from heaven to bestow: it is the meat that endureth to everlasting life, divine knowledge and grace, which, by invigorating all the faculties of the soul, make it at once incorruptible and immortal; neither ought ye to follow the Son of man with no other intention than to obtain the meat that perisheth, but in hopes of being rewarded with the meat that endureth to everlasting life. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." (John vi. 27.)

The Jews, who were accustomed to the metaphors of meat and drink, as they are frequently found in the writings of their own prophets to signify wisdom and knowledge, might have easily understood what our blessed Saviour meant by the meat "enduring to everlasting life." They, however, entirely mistook him, imagining that he spake of some delicious healthful animal food which would render them immortal, and which was only to be procured under the government of their great Messiah. It is, therefore, no wonder that his exhortation should so greatly affect them that they asked him what they should do to erect the Messiah's kingdom, and to obtain that excellent meat,

which he said God had authorised him to give to his followers.

The Jews were elated with the prospect of the mighty empire the promised Messiah was to establish, and doubtless expected that Jesus would have bidden them first to rise against the Romans, vindicate their own liberties, and then establish in every country, by the terror of fire and sword, the authority of that powerful Prince so long promised to the Jewish nation. To convince them, therefore, of their mistake, and inform them what God really required of them towards erecting the Messiah's kingdom, Jesus told them that they should believe on the person sent to them from the God of Jacob; but this answer exceedingly offended them. They were persuaded that he could not be the Messiah promised in the law and the prophets, who took no care to erect a temporal kingdom; and some of them, more audacious than the rest, had the confidence to tell him that since he assumed the character of the Messiah, and required them to believe in him as such, notwithstanding his character was entirely different from the great Deliverer described in the sacred writings, it was necessary that he should perform greater miracles than either Moses or any of the old prophets, if he was desirous of convincing them that they ought to believe him the long-promised Messiah. "They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." (John vi. 30, 31.)

By extolling the miracles of the manna, by calling it bread from heaven, and by insinuating that this miracle was wrought by Moses, the Jews endeavoured to depreciate both Christ's mission and his miracle of the loaves. They considered his miracle as a single meal of terrestrial food, at which not above nine or ten thousand had been fed, whereas Moses had supported the whole Jewish nation during the space of forty years in the wilderness by celestial food. To this objection the blessed Jesus replied: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." (John vi. 32.) Moses did not give you the manna that fell around the camp in the wilderness, nor did it descend from heaven; it was formed in the regions of the air by the Omnipotent hand of the God of Jacob. But by the miracle of the loaves my heavenly Father hath typified the true, the spiritual, the heavenly bread, which he himself giveth to the sons of men, and of which the manna was only a symbolical representation: the food that sustained the Israelites in the wilderness was sufficient only for a single nation, but this for all the children of men.

Many of the Jews had listened with pleasure to his doctrine, and having heard him describe the properties of

the celestial bread, they were animated with an earnest desire of being always fed with it, exclaiming, "Lord, evermore give us this bread;" to which the blessed Jesus answered, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John vi. 34, 35.)

Having made this answer to those who listened attentively to his doctrine, he turned himself to those who heard him with prejudice, and took every advantage of wresting his words. You ask me, says he, to show you a sign, that ye may see and believe me to be the true Messiah. Surely you have seen it: you have seen my character and mission in the many miracles I have performed—miracles abundantly sufficient to convince you that I am really the Messiah so often promised by the ancient prophets, so long expected by the whole Jewish nation. But notwithstanding all these proofs, your hearts are still hardened; you expect a temporal prince, who shall raise the Jewish kingdom above all the empires of the earth; and because I do not affect the authority and pomp of an earthly monarch, you reject me as an impostor. Your infidelity, therefore, does not proceed from want of evidence, as you vainly pretend, but from the perverseness of your own disposition, which may, perhaps, in time be overcome; for all those that the Father hath given me, however obstinate they may be for a season, will at last believe on the Son of God. Nor will I ever reject any that come to me, however low their circumstances may be, however vile they may appear in their own eyes, or however greatly their violence against my doctrines may have been exerted. I came down from heaven not to act according to the common method of human passions, which excite men to return "evil for evil," but to bear with them, to try all possible means to bring them to repentance, and lead them in the strait paths of virtue, which terminate at the mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

It is the fixed determination of my Father to bestow eternal life on all who truly believe in me, and therefore I will raise them up at the last day.

As the prospect of the greatest part of the Jews extended no further than temporal privileges and advantages, it is no wonder that they were offended at this doctrine, especially at his affirming that he was the bread of life, and that he came down from heaven. Was not this man, said they, born into the world like other mortals? And are we not acquainted with his parents? How, then, can he pretend to come down from heaven?

But these degrading thoughts could not escape the censure of him to whom nothing is a secret. You need not, said the blessed Jesus, object to my birth, and the meanness of my relations, nor consider them as inconsistent with my heavenly extraction; for while you believe your teachers, who have so shamefully corrupted

the oracles of Omnipotence, and filled your minds with the vain expectations of a temporal kingdom, you cannot believe on me. No man can believe on the Son of God unless he be persuaded by the Father. You need not be surprised at this; for, however ye may imagine that all men, at the appearance of the Messiah, will flock to him with great cheerfulness, and become the willing subjects of his kingdom, without any extraordinary means of persuasion, the prophets plainly foretell the contrary, for they promise that men shall enjoy the teaching of the Father in a far more eminent manner during the Messiah's kingdom than under any preceding dispensation; consequently persuasion, and the most earnest persuasion too, is necessary. You are not to understand that by being taught of God you are to see with your bodily eyes the invisible Jehovah, because that privilege is confined to the Son alone; but that you are to be taught by the Spirit of God whatever is requisite for your eternal interest in and by me, who am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Having thus asserted the dignity of his mission, and demonstrated that it really belonged to him, the blessed Jesus examined the comparison between himself, considered as the bread from heaven, and the manna which Moses provided for their fathers in the howling wilderness. The manna, said he, which your fathers eat in the desert, could not preserve them from temporal death; but the bread which came down from heaven will render men immortal. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (John vi. 51.)

Though the Divine Teacher, on this occasion, made use of no other expressions than what the Jews had been accustomed to interpret in a figurative sense, yet so great was their perverseness, that they considered them as spoken literally, and were astonished beyond measure at what he could mean by saying he would give them his "flesh to eat." But Jesus, knowing how unreasonable his hearers were, did not think proper to explain himself more particularly at this time; but persisting in the same figurative manner of expression, he repeated and affirmed more earnestly what he had before asserted. Except, said he, ye be entirely united to me by a hearty practice and belief of my doctrine, partake of the merit of that sacrifice which I shall offer for the sins of the world, continue in the communion of my religion, and receive spiritual nourishment by the continual participation of those means of grace which I shall purchase for you by my death, ye can never enter the happy mansions of eternity. "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (John vi. 54, 55.)

This is the bread which, as I before told you, came down from heaven—a kind of bread infinitely superior to that of manna, both in its nature and efficacy. It is different in its nature from manna, because it is not to be eaten as your fathers did that food in the wilderness; they "eat manna, and are dead." It is different in its effect, because he that "eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

These particulars Jesus spake in the hearing of all the people who attended the public worship in the synagogue of Capernaum, and though most of the metaphors were very easy to be understood, yet they could not comprehend what he meant by "eating his flesh and drinking his blood"—a thing not only prohibited by the law of Moses, but also repugnant to the customs of all civilised nations.

Many, therefore, who had followed him considered it as inconsistent and absolutely absurd. But Jesus answered, Are you offended because I told you my flesh is bread, that it came down from heaven, and that you must, in order to have eternal life, eat my flesh and drink my blood? But what if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up bodily into heaven, from whence he was sent by his heavenly Father? You will then surely be persuaded that I really came from heaven, and, at the same time, be convinced that you cannot eat my flesh in a corporeal manner. I never meant that you should understand the expression literally; my flesh in that case would be of no advantage to the children of men. The metaphor was only used to indicate that you must believe in the doctrines which I preach; for to reveal these I took upon me the veil of flesh, and assumed the nature of man. It is, therefore, more properly my Spirit that confers this life on the human race, and renders them immortal. My doctrine may, perhaps, be ineffectual to some of you, because ye are desirous of perverting it, and from thence to form a pretence for forsaking me. I well know the secret recesses of every heart, and therefore told you that no man can believe on me except it be given him of my Father.

The self-sufficient, self-righteous Jews were so offended at this discourse, that many of them who had hitherto been our Saviour's disciples went out of the synagogue, and never more came to hear him. They found that all their pleasing views of worldly grandeur and an extensive kingdom could have nothing more than an ideal foundation if they acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah; but as they were unwilling to abandon all their favourite hopes of power, they refused to own him for the great Redeemer of Israel they had so long expected.

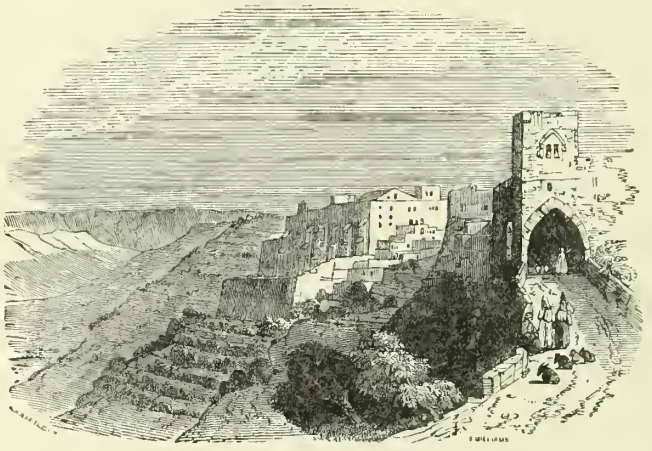
When the Jews were departed, Jesus turned himself to his disciples, and with a look of ineffable sweetness said to them, "Will you also go away?" To this Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou

hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John vi. 68, 69.)

The Ascension. (*Settegast.*)

Peter in this reply alluded to our Lord's declaration of himself, in which he says that he was the bread of life, founding his faith in him as the Messiah. But Jesus, to convince him that he was not ignorant of the

most secret thoughts of the heart, nor afraid that his enemies should be companions of his most retired hours, and witnesses of his most secret actions, told him that one of the twelve was a wicked man, and would be guilty of the vilest action. The prediction of Jesus was punctually verified when Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve chosen disciples, basely betrayed his great Lord and Master.



Bethlehem.

CHAPTER XV.

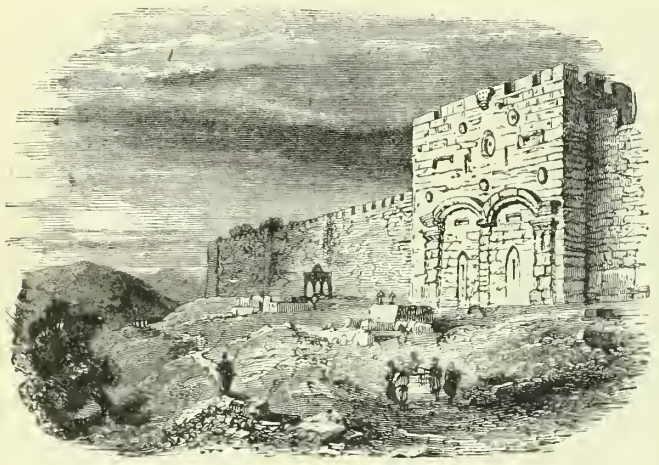
Pharisaical superstition severely reprimanded. The great Redeemer continues to display his power and benevolence in the relief of several objects of affliction. Guards his disciples against the prevailing errors and fallacies of the scribes and Pharisees. Proceeds on the works of his heavenly Father.

THE season of the grand Passover approaching, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to attend that solemnity; but the Jews, being offended at his discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum, made an attempt upon his life. Our Lord, therefore, finding it impossible to remain at Jerusalem in safety, departed from that city as soon as the Passover was ended, and retired into Galilee.

The Pharisees were sensible they could not perpetrate their malicious designs upon him on that occasion; yet they followed him, hoping to find something by which they might accuse him, watched every opportunity, and at last ventured to attack him for permitting his disciples to eat with unwashed hands, because in so doing they transgressed the tradition of the elders. Moses had, indeed, required external cleanliness as a part of their religion; but it was only to signify how careful the servants of the Almighty should be to purify themselves from all uncleanness both of flesh and spirit. These ceremonial institutions were, in process of time, prodigiously multiplied; and the Pharisees, who pretended to observe every tittle of the law, considered it as a notorious offence to eat bread with unwashed hands, though at the same time they suffered the more weighty precepts of the law to be neglected and forgotten.

To expose the absurdity of such superstitious customs, our Saviour applied to them the words of the prophet Isaiah, "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;" adding that all their worship was vain and displeasing to the Almighty while they practised themselves, and imposed upon others, the frivolous precepts of man's invention, and at the same time neglected

the eternal rules of righteousness; and to remove all objections that might be brought against this imputation of gross profaneness in the Pharisees, he supported it by a very remarkable instance. God, said the Saviour of the world, hath commanded children to honour their parents, and to maintain them when reduced to poverty by sickness, age, or misfortunes, promising life to such as obey this precept, and threatening death to those who disregard it. But, notwithstanding the peremptory commandment of Omnipotence, you teach



Golden Gate, Jerusalem.

that it is a more sacred duty to enrich the temple than to nourish their parents reduced to the utmost necessity, pretending that what is offered to the great Parent of the universe is much better bestowed than what is given to the support of our earthly parents, making the interest of God absolutely different from that of his creatures. Nay, ye impiously teach that it is no breach of the commandment for a man to suffer his parents to perish, provided he has given what ought to nourish them to the temple of Jerusalem. Thus have you concealed under the cloak of piety the most horrid, the most unnatural crime any person can commit.

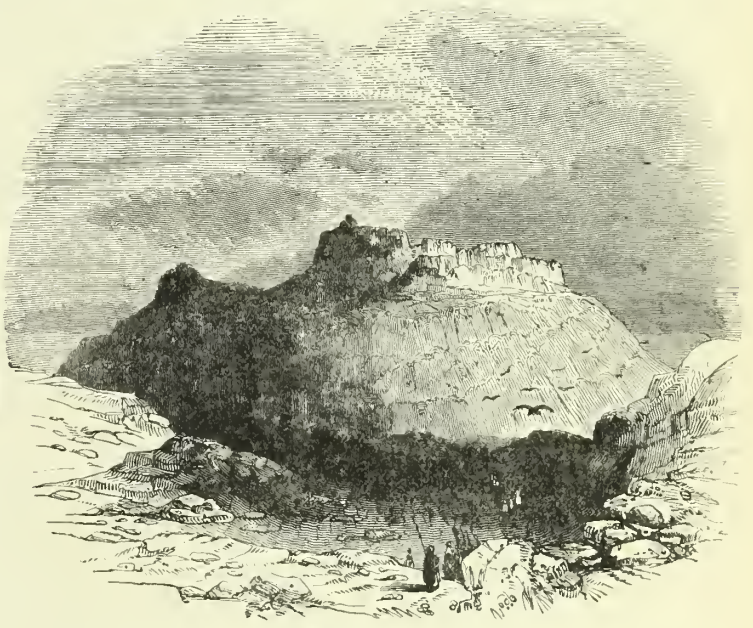
Having thus reproved the Pharisees, he called the multitude to him, and desired them to reflect on the absurdity of the precepts inculcated by the scribes. These hypocrites, said he, solicitous about trifles, neglect the great duties of morality, which are of eternal obligation. They shudder with horror at unwashed hands, but are perfectly easy under the guilt of a polluted conscience, though they must be sensible that "not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." (Matt. xv. 11.)

The haughty Pharisees were highly offended at his speaking in a degrading manner of their traditions; and the apostles, who would gladly have reconciled their Master and the Pharisees, insinuated to Jesus that he ought to have acted in another manner, to which our Saviour answered, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be plucked up." (Matt. xv. 13.) As if he had said, You have not cause to fear their anger, as both they and their doctrine shall perish together, for neither of them came from God; adding, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (Matt. xv. 14.)

His disciples not fully comprehending this doctrine, they desired their

Master to explain it. This our Saviour complied with, and showed them that meats, being of a corporeal nature, could not defile the mind of man, or render him polluted in the sight of the Almighty, unless they are used to excess or in opposition to the commandment of God, and even then the pollution arose from the man, and not from the meat; but, on the contrary, that which proceedeth out of the mouth of a man comes from his heart, and really pollutes his mind.

These doctrines of the truth could not fail of irritating the Pharisees, as they tended to strip them of the mask with which they concealed their deformity and rendered themselves so venerable in the eyes of the vulgar; and therefore their plots were levelled against his reputation and life. Jesus, to avoid their malice, retired to the very borders of Palestine, to the coasts of those two celebrated Gentile cities, Tyre and Sidon, proposing there to conceal himself for a time; but he could not be hid. It was as impossible for the Divine "Sun of righteousness" to be concealed wherever he came, with his healing wings and message of peace, as it is for the sun in the firmament when he riseth in all his glory, "as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and as a giant rejoicing to run his course." For a certain woman of Canaan, having heard of him, determined to implore his assistance. She was, indeed, one of the most abject sort of Gentiles, a Canaanite, one of that detested race with which the Jews would have no dealing, nor even conversation; but notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances, she threw herself as an humble petitioner on the benevolent mercies of the Son of God. Strong necessity urged her on; grief and insuperable distress caused her to be importunate. Alas, unhappy parent! her only daughter, her beloved child, had an



Mount Hor.

unclean spirit—"was grievously vexed with a devil."

When her case was so urgent, and her woes so poignant, who can wonder that she was so importunate, and would take no refusal from the Divine Person whom she knew was able to deliver her? Accordingly she came, she fell at his feet, she besought him, she cried, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David," have mercy! I plead no merits; as a worthless, suffering wretch, I entreat only the bowels of thy mercy;

I entreat it, for I believe thee to be the Son of David, the promised Messiah, the much-desired Saviour of the world. Have mercy on me, for the case of my child and her distresses are my own: "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." (Matt. xv. 22.)

Is it not at first view astonishing that such a petitioner should be rejected, and rejected by a bountiful and merciful Redeemer, who kindly invited all that were heavy laden to come to him, who promised never to cast out any that would come, and whose business it was "to go about doing good?"

We, however, find he answered this woman not a word: he did not, in appearance, take the least notice either of her or her distress! But this silence did not intimidate her: she still cried, she still besought, she still importunately pressed her petition, so that the very disciples were moved with her cries, and became her advocates. They themselves, though Jews, besought their Master to dismiss this petitioner—to grant her request, and to send her away.

But Jesus soon silenced them by an answer agreeable to their own prejudices. "I am not sent," said he, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." To this the disciples readily assented, and, as they had a high opinion of the Jews' prerogative, were so well satisfied with the answer, that we hear them pleading no more for this lost, this miserable Gentile.

But this soothed not her griefs; it was her own cause, and what is immediately her own concern animates her to the most zealous application. Somewhat encouraged that she was the subject of discourse between our Lord and his disciples, she ventured to approach the Saviour of the world, though she well knew that the law actually forbids such an intercourse; yet she came, she worshipped this "Son of David," she confessed again his divinity, and prayed, saying, "Lord, help me."

The compassionate Saviour now condescended to speak to her, but with words seemingly sufficient to have discouraged every further attempt; nay, to have filled her with bitter dislike to his person, though she had conceived such high and noble notions of his mercy and disfavour. "It is not meet," said he, "to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." (Matt. xv. 26.) It is not justice to deprive the Jews, who are the children of the covenant, the descendants of Abraham, of any part of those blessings which I came into the world to bestow, especially to you, who are aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.

This answer, however severe, could not shake her humility, nor overcome her patience. She meekly answered, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." (Matt. xv. 27.) Let me enjoy that kindness which the dogs of any family are not denied; from the plenty of miraculous cures

The Comforter

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which thou bestowest on the Jews, drop this one to me, who am a poor distressed heathen, for they will suffer no greater loss by it than the children of a family do by the crumbs which are cast to the dogs.

Our Lord, having put the woman's faith to a very severe trial, evidently proved that the woman possessed a just notion of his power and goodness, and of her own unworthiness; wrought with pleasure the cure she solicited in behalf of her daughter; and, at the same time, gave her faith the praises it so justly deserved. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." (Matt. xv. 28.)

After performing this miracle on the coast of the Gentiles, Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of Decapolis. In this country a man was brought to him who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech. Objects in distress were always treated with benevolence by the holy Jesus; but, as the people now thronged about him in expectation that he would soon establish his kingdom, he thought proper to take the man, with his relations, aside from the multitude, after which he put his fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue, that the deaf man, who could not be instructed by language, might know from whence all his benefits flowed. He then "looked up to heaven, and sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man." (Mark vii. 34—36.)

But notwithstanding they were enjoined to secrecy, the man, or his relations, published it in every part of the country, doubtless thinking they could not be too lavish in the praises of so great a benefactor, especially as the modesty with which he had performed the cure abundantly demonstrated that his sole view was the benefit of the human race

This rumour gathered the multitude round him in Decapolis, for the fame of his miracles was extended to every corner of the country: he therefore, to avoid these prodigious crowds of people, retired to a desert mountain near the Sea of Galilee. But the solitary retreats of the wilderness were unable to conceal this beneficent Saviour of the human race. They soon discovered his retreat, and brought him from all quarters the sick, the lame, the dumb, the blind, and the maimed. The sight of so many objects in distress so excited the compassion of the Son of God that he graciously released them from all their complaints. Miracles like these could not fail of astonishing the spectators, especially those performed upon the dumb; for it must be remembered that he not only conferred on these the faculty of hearing and pronouncing articulate sounds, but conveyed at once into their minds the whole language of their country;

they were instantly acquainted with all the words it contained, their significations, their forms, their powers, and their uses: at the same time, they enjoyed the habit of speaking it both fluently and copiously. This was surely enough to demonstrate to the most stupid that such works could have been effected by nothing less than Infinite Power. "The multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel." (Matt. xv. 31.)

The various works performed by the blessed Redeemer detained the multitude in the desert with him three days, during which time they spent all the provisions they had brought into this solitary place. But Jesus would not send them away fasting, lest any who had followed him so far from their habitations should faint in returning. Accordingly he again exerted his Almighty power to feed the multitude a second time in the wilderness.

It is highly worthy of our notice, the great wisdom of our blessed Saviour in choosing to spend so great a part of the time he executed his public ministry in the wilderness and in solitary places. He did not seek the applauses of men, but the eternal salvation of their souls, and therefore often delivered his doctrines in these retreats, followed by such only as had the disposition proper for profiting by his instructions. It could not be expected that many of different dispositions would accompany him into solitudes, where they were to sustain the inconveniences of hunger for several days successively, and be at the same time exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather. Those only who were desirous of instruction could, therefore, be expected to follow the blessed Jesus into those retired parts; and on those, doubtless, his doctrine distilled like dew, and like the small rain upon the tender herb. Happy mortals who thus exchanged the shallow and frothy streams of folly for the deep and salutary rivers of eternal wisdom; who left the noise and bustle of covetous, bigoted people for the calm instructions of the Son of God, and exchanged the perishing bread of this world for the "Bread of life, the bread that came down from heaven!"

After feeding the multitude miraculously, Jesus retired into a district called Dalmanutha, a part of the territory of Magdala. Here he was visited by the Pharisees, who, having heard that he had a second time fed the multitude miraculously, were fearful that the common people would acknowledge him for the Messiah, and therefore determined openly and publicly to confute his pretensions to that character.

In order to this they boldly demanded of him a sign from heaven; for it must be remembered that the Jews expected the Messiah would make his first public appearance in the clouds of heaven, and in a glorious manner establish a temporal kingdom.

This opinion was founded on the following prophecy of Daniel, which they understood literally: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. vii. 13, 14.)

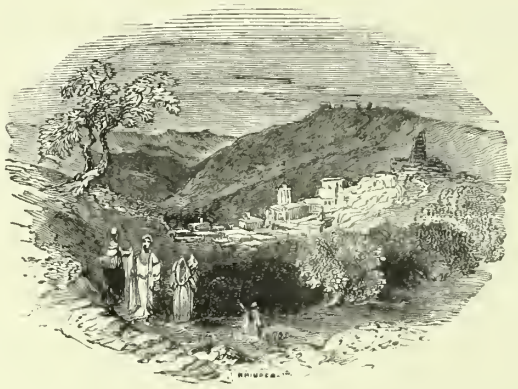
It is evident that the Pharisees therefore, by desiring Jesus to show them a sign from heaven, meant that he should demonstrate himself to be the Messiah by coming in a visible and miraculous manner from heaven, and wresting, with great pomp, the sceptre of David from the hands of the Romans.

If the minds of the Pharisees had been open to conviction, the proofs which Jesus was daily giving them would have been more than sufficient to establish the truth of his mission, and demonstrate that he was the long-expected Messiah. But they were not desirous of being convinced, and to that alone, and not to want of evidence or of capacity in themselves, it was owing that they refused to acknowledge our Saviour to be the person foretold by the prophet. Their disposition was absolutely incorrigible, so that Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit, and declared that the sign they sought should never be given them, and that the only sign they were to expect was that of the prophet Jonas, or the miracle of his own resurrection—a sign, indeed, much greater than any shown by the ancient prophets, and consequently a sign which demonstrated that Jesus was far superior to them all. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." (Matt. xvi. 4.)

Having thus removed the impertinent curiosity of the Pharisees, he departed with his disciples, and entered into a ship; and as they sailed he cautioned them to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which he termed leaven, from its pernicious influence in filling the minds of men with pride and other irregular passions, these hypocrites chiefly insisting on the observation of frivolous traditions, but neglecting the true principles of piety, and hence filling the minds of their disciples with a high opinion of their own sanctity. But the disciples, having forgotten to take bread with them, understood that he intended to caution them against procuring it from the heathens or Samaritans. They were so stupid as not to know that their Master, who had fed above ten thousand people with five loaves, was also capable of providing for them in their necessities.

On his landing at Bethsaida, they brought unto him a blind man, desiring that he would heal him. Jesus accordingly took the man by

the hand, and led him out of the city, and having spit upon his eyes, and put his hands upon him, asked him if he saw aught, to which the man answered, "I see men as trees walking," a very proper expression to convey an idea of the indistinctness of his vision. Jesus then put his hands again upon him, and he was restored to sight, "and saw every man clearly." It should be remembered that the people of Bethsaida had, by their ingratitude, impenitence, and infidelity, greatly displeased the Saviour of the world, and this, perhaps, was the reason why Jesus would not perform the cure in that city, but led the man out into the adjacent plain. The people also had for a long time been solicitous that he would take upon himself the character of the Messiah, and therefore he chose to perform this miracle without the city, to prevent their future importunity, so incompatible with the modesty and lowliness of our dear Lord and Master.



Bethany.

CHAPTER XVI.

The blessed Jesus delegates a special power to Peter, one of his disciples; pronounces the final judgment of the world; and is afterwards transfigured upon the mount.

HAVING displayed his power and goodness in restoring the blind man to sight, the blessed Lord departed from Bethsaida, and retired into the territory of Cæsarea Philippi, where, being desirous of proving in some measure the faith of the apostles, he asked them, saying, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" In answer to this question the disciples replied, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." (Matt. xvi. 14.) The people in general mistook the character of our Saviour, because he did not assume that outward pomp and grandeur with which they supposed the Messiah would be adorned. Jesus was therefore desirous of knowing what idea his disciples formed of his character, as they had long enjoyed the benefit of his doctrines and miracles, and accordingly asked them what they themselves understood him to be. To this question Simon Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Our Saviour acknowledged the title, telling Peter that God alone had revealed the secret to him; and, in allusion to his surname "Peter," which signifies a "rock," our Saviour promised that he should have a principal hand in establishing his kingdom, and that the Christian church should be erected on his labours, as on a solid foundation, never to be destroyed. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 18, 19.)

Having delegated this power to Peter, our Saviour strictly forbade his disciples to tell any man that he was the Messiah, because it had been decreed in the courts of heaven that he should be rejected by the rulers of Israel as a false Christ, and suffer the pains of death—circumstances which could not fail of giving his followers great offence, as they did not yet understand the true nature of his kingdom, and therefore he thought proper to let every man form a judgment of his mission from his doctrines and miracles, and not assume publicly the character of the Messiah under such great disadvantages.

The foregoing discourses had doubtless filled the apostles' minds with lofty imaginations, and therefore our Saviour thought proper to acquaint them with his sufferings, in order to check any fond expectations of temporal power. Peter, however, was greatly displeased to hear his Master talk of dying at Jerusalem, when he had just before accepted of the title of Messiah. Accordingly, he rebuked him for the expression, which he was so bold as to think unguarded. But Jesus, turning himself about, said unto Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matt. xvi. 23.)

Peter's conduct in this respect arose from an immoderate attachment to sensual objects. Our Saviour thought proper to declare publicly that all who intended to share with him in the glory of the heavenly Canaan must deny themselves; that is, they must be always ready to renounce every worldly pleasure, and even life itself, when the cause of religion required it. He also told them that in this life they must expect to meet with troubles and disappointments, and that whoever intended to be his disciple "must take up his cross daily, and follow him."

Thus did the blessed Jesus fully explain to his disciples the true nature of his kingdom, and at the same time intimated that though they had already undergone many afflictions, yet they must expect still more and greater, which they must sustain with equal fortitude, following their Master in the footsteps of his afflictions. This duty, however hard, was absolutely necessary, because, by losing their temporal life, they would gain that which was eternal: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." (Luke ix. 24.) "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.)

To add to the weight of this argument, and enforce the necessity of self-denial, our Saviour particularly declared that a day was fixed for distributing rewards and punishments to all the human race, and that he himself was appointed by the Father

as universal Judge, so that his enemies could not flatter themselves with the hope of escaping the punishments they deserved, nor his friends be afraid of

The Last Judgment. (*Cornelius.*)

losing their eternal reward. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also

shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark viii. 38.)

To fortify the minds of his disciples, he informed them that he would not appear to judge the world in his low and despised condition, but magnificently arrayed in both his own and his Father's glory; nor attended by twelve weak disciples, but surrounded by myriads of celestial spirits, with numberless hosts of mighty angels; nor should his rewards be the great offices and large possessions of a temporal kingdom, but the joys of immortality.

Let us contemplate the glory of the Judge and the solemnity of the final judgment. He shall come in the majestic splendour of his glorified body, pompously arrayed with the inaccessible light wherein Jehovah resides, and which, darting through and enlightening the infinite regions of space with its ineffable brightness, shall make even the sun to disappear. Dressed in this awful manner, the great Judge, attended by the whole celestial host, will "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," (1 Thess. iv. 16,) making heaven, earth, and hell to resound. The dead of all countries and all times will hear the tremendous call. Hark! the living, filled with joy, exult at the approach of Omnipotence; or, seized with inexpressible horror, send up the most piercing cries, and are all changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! The dead press forth from their graves, and follow each other in close procession! Behold—but ah! nothing can behold, nothing can bear his presence! The heavens depart like a scroll rolling itself together! Every mountain and every island is moved! The bond, the free, the rich, the great, captains and kings, to avoid the face of him that sitteth on the throne, the presence of the Lamb, rush beneath the trembling mountains, and plunge into flaming rivers; but neither mountains nor flame will devour them, for they are raised immortal. Behold him, then, for all must behold him—even his eye whose unthinking hand drove the nails at Calvary; nor heaven nor earth exist, stars and sun are vanished, lest they should darken the procession! Once the crucifixion of Jesus, and now his glory extinguishes the sun! Lo! hell, with what reluctance, comes forth for sentence! Lo! two worlds to be judged, and the third an assistant spectator! Behold with what beauty, with what boldness, with what joy, some spring forward toward the judgment-seat! See, on the other hand, how amazed, how terrified the wicked appear, with what vehemence they wish the extinction of their being! Fain would they fly, but cannot; impelled by a force—strong necessity—they hasten to the place of judgment; as they advance, the sight of the tribunal from afar strikes them with new terror. They approach in the deepest silence, and gather

round the throne by thousands and thousands. In the meantime, the angels, having gathered together the elect from the uttermost parts of the earth, fly around the numberless multitudes, chanting melodious songs, and rejoicing that the day of general retribution is come, when vice shall be thrown from its high post of usurpation, and virtue exalted to the pinnacle of honour; when the intricacies of Providence shall be unravelled, the perfections of the Almighty vindicated, the church of Christ, purchased by his blood, cleared from her iniquitous members, and everything that offendeth banished for ever.

Behold! the books are opened, silence proclaimed, and every individual filled with awful consciousness that he in particular is observed by the Almighty, so that not one single person can be concealed in the immensity of the crowd. The Judge, who can be biassed by no bribes, softened by no subtle insinuations, imposed upon by no feigned excuses, needs no evidence, but distinguishes with an unerring certainty. They separate! They feel their judgment in them, and hasten to their proper places, the righteous on one hand of the throne, and the wicked on the other. Behold, how beautiful, with the brightness of virtue, do the righteous stand at God's tribunal! Their looks are serene, and expressive of hopes full of immortality. On the other hand, the wicked, confounded at the remembrance of their past lives, terrified with the bitter apprehensions of what is to come, hang down their dejected heads, and wish to hide themselves in the fathomless abyss, but all in vain; there is no escaping nor appealing from this tribunal. Behold, with mercy shining in his countenance, the King invites the righteous to take possession of the kingdom prepared for them

from the beginning of the world, but with frowns of anger drives the wicked to punishment which shall have no end, no remission, no alleviation. What horror, what despair must seize these wretched souls when they see hell gaping, hear the devils howling, and feel the unspeakable torment of an awakened conscience! Now they seek for death, but find it not; would

gladly be righteous, but it is too late!

The happy land of promise, formed by the hand of the Almighty, large, beautiful, and pleasant, a proper habitation for his people, and long expected by them as their country, now appears. Here all the righteous are assembled, forming one vast, one happy society, even the kingdom, the city of God. Here Omnipotence manifests himself in a peculiar manner to his servants, wipes away all tears from off their faces, and adorns them with the beauties of immortality. Here they drink a plenitude of joys from the crystal river proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life. Here there shall be no death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. Happy day! happy place! and happy people! Imagination faints with the fatigue of stretching itself to comprehend the vast, the unmeasurable thought.

As this doctrine of Christ being appointed the universal Judge might appear incredible at that time, on account of his humiliation, he told them that some who heard him speak should not taste of death till they saw him coming in his kingdom. "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. xvi. 28.) There are some here present that shall not die till they see a faint representation of the glory in which I shall come at the last day, and an eminent example of my power inflicted on the men of this sinful generation.

To verify which prediction the disciples lived to see their Master coming in his kingdom when they were witnesses of his transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension, and had the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit conferred upon them—lived to see Jerusalem with the Jewish state destroyed, and the gospel propagated through the greatest part of the then known world. About eight days after this discourse, our blessed Saviour being with the multitude in the country of Cæsarea Philippi, he left them in the plain, and, accompanied by Peter, James, and John, ascended an exceedingly high mountain. In this solitude, while Jesus was praying with these three disciples, he was transfigured; his face became radiant and dazzling, for it shone like the sun in his meridian clearness. At the same time his garments acquired a snowy whiteness far beyond anything human art could produce, a whiteness bright as the light, and sweetly refulgent, but in a degree inferior to the radiance of his countenance. Thus as it were for an instant the Son of God, during his state of humiliation, suffered the glory of his divinity to shine through the veil of human nature with which it was covered; and to heighten the grandeur and solemnity of the scene, Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, a zealous defender of the laws, appeared in the beauties of im-

mortality, the robes in which the inhabitants of the heavenly Canaan are adorned. The disciples, it seems, did not see the beginning of this transfiguration, for, happening to fall asleep at the time of prayer, they lost that pleasure, together with a great part of the conversation which these two prophets held with the only-begotten Son of God. They,

The Transfiguration on the Mount. (Raffaelle.)

however, understood that the subject was his meritorious sufferings and death, by which he was to redeem the world—a subject that had, a few days before, given great offence to the disciples, particularly to Peter. At beholding this illustrious sight the disciples were greatly amazed; but the forwardness of Peter's disposition prompting him to say some-

thing, he uttered he knew not what. "Master," said he, "it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." (Mark ix. 5.)

This disciple imagined that Jesus had now assumed his proper dignity, that Elias was come according to Malachi's prediction, and that the Messiah's kingdom was at length begun.

Accordingly, he thought it was necessary to provide some accommodation for his Master and his august assistants, intending, perhaps, to bring the rest of the disciples, with the multitude from the plain below, to behold his matchless glory. This he thought was much better for his Master than to be put to death at Jerusalem, concerning which Jesus had been talking with the messengers from heaven, and the design of which Peter could not comprehend. But "while he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. xvii. 5.)

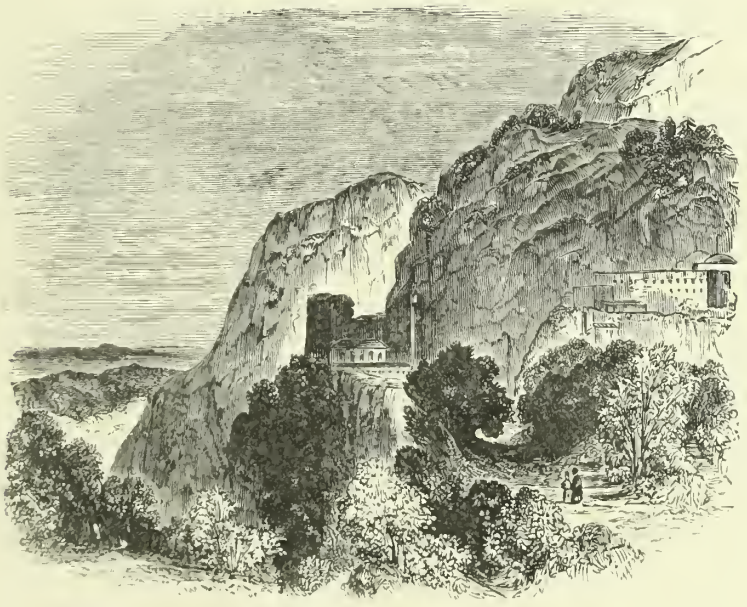
When the three disciples heard the voice, which, like the roaring thunder, burst from the cloud, and was such as mortals were unaccustomed to hear, they fell on their face, and continued in that posture till Jesus approached, and raising them up, dispelled their fears, saying unto them, "Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." (Matt. xvii. 7, 8.)

Jesus, having continued all night with his three disciples in the mountain, returned to the plain early in the morning, charging them to conceal what they had seen till after he was risen from the dead. He well knew that the world, and even his own disciples, were not yet able to comprehend the design of his transfiguration, and that if it had been published before his resurrection it might have appeared incredible, because nothing but afflictions and persecutions had hitherto attended him. He was truly a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

But the doctrine of the resurrection, to which the transfiguration alluded, was what the disciples were utterly unable to understand. They had never learnt that the Messiah was to die, far less that he was to be raised from the dead. They were, on the contrary, persuaded that he was to abide for ever, and that his kingdom was to have no end: they were also greatly surprised at the sudden departure of Elias, and could not comprehend what the scribes meant by affirming that he must appear before the Messiah erected his empire. They therefore, after long debating among themselves, asked their Master, "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" To which Jesus answered that Elias should truly come first, according to the prediction of Malachi, "and restore all things;" but at the same time he assured them that Elias was

The Transfiguration

already come, and described the treatment he had met with from that stiff-necked people, giving them to understand that he spake of John the Baptist. "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." (Matt. xvii. 12, 13.)



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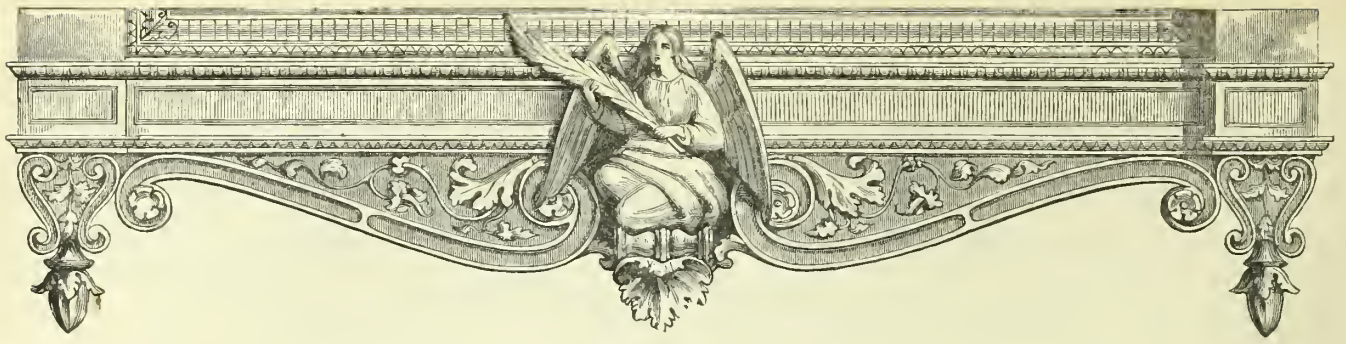


CHAPTER XVII.

Our Saviour relieves a youth tortured with a dumb spirit. Conforms cheerfully to the custom of the country by paying the tribute. Reproves the pride of his disciples, and delivers some excellent moral precepts.

WHEN our Lord approached the descent of the mountain, accompanied by his three disciples, he saw a great multitude surrounding the nine who continued in the plain, and the scribes disputing with them. The people, seeing Jesus coming from the mountain, ran to him, and saluted him with particular reverence, after which Jesus asked the scribes what was the subject of their debate with his disciples; to which one of the multitude answered, "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." (Mark ix. 17, 18.)

This answer being made by one of the multitude, and not by the scribes to whom the question was directed, indicates that they had been disputing with the disciples on their not being able to cure this afflicted youth. Perhaps their making this unsuccessful attempt had given the scribes occasion to boast that a devil was at length found which neither they nor their Master were able to conquer. This seems to be indicated by the manner in which our Saviour addressed himself to these arrogant rulers. "O faithless generation," says he, "how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" Will no miracles ever be able to convince you? Must I always bear with your infidelity? You have surely seen sufficient demonstrations of my power; notwithstanding, ye still discover the most criminal infidelity. After speaking in this manner to the scribes, he turned himself to the father of the young man, and said, "Bring thy son hither." But no sooner was he brought in sight of his deliverer than the evil spirit attacked

him as it were with double fury: "the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." (Mark ix. 20.)

Jesus could easily have prevented this attack, but he permitted it that the minds of the spectators might be impressed with a more lively idea of this youth's distress. And for the same reason it was that he asked the father how long he had been in this deplorable condition, to which the afflicted parent answered, "Of a child. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." (Mark ix. 21, 22.)

The inability of our Lord's disciples to cast out this spirit had greatly discouraged the afflicted father; and the exquisite torture of his son, and the remembrance of its long continuance, so dispirited him that he began to fear this possession was even too great for the power of Jesus himself, as the scribes had before affirmed, and therefore could not help expressing his doubts and fears. But Jesus, to make him sensible of his mistake, said to him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth;" on which the father cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The vehement manner in which he spake causing the crowd to gather from every quarter, Jesus "rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." (Mark ix. 25.)

No sooner was this powerful command pronounced than the devil, with a hideous howling, and convulsing the suffering patient in the most deplorable manner, came out, leaving the youth senseless and without motion, till Jesus, taking him by the hand, restored him to life, and delivered him, perfectly recovered, to his father.

The nine disciples, during this whole transaction, remained silent. They were doubtless mortified to think that they had lost, by some fault of their own, the power of working miracles lately conferred upon them by their Master, and for this reason were afraid to ask the cause in the presence of the multitude. But when they came into the house they desired Jesus to inform them why they failed in their attempt to heal that remarkable youth, to which Jesus answered, "Because of your unbelief." But, to encourage them, he described the efficacy of the faith of miracles. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matt. xvii. 20.) Nothing shall be too great for you to accomplish, when the glory of God and the good of his church are concerned, provided you have a proper degree of faith: even yonder mountain, which bids defiance to the storm, and smiles at all the attacks of its mingled

horrors, shall, at your command, leave its firm basis, and remove to another place.

The expulsion of the dumb spirit seems to have astonished the disciples more than any other miracle they had seen their Master perform, so that our Saviour found it necessary to moderate their high admiration of his works by again predicting his own death, and retiring for a time into the unfrequented parts of Galilee. But they could not comprehend how the Messiah, who was to abide for ever, and was to come to deliver others from the stroke of death, should himself fall by the hand of that universal destroyer. And because he spake of rising again the third day, they could not conceive the reason for his dying at all, and for his lying so short a time in the chambers of the grave.

Though they were alarmed at this declaration, they remembered that he had often inculcated this doctrine, and reprimanded Peter for being unwilling to hear it.

After a short tour through the desert parts of Galilee, Jesus returned into Capernaum, the place of his general residence. Soon after his arrival the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him whether his Master would pay the tribute. That disciple, it seems, had promised that Jesus would satisfy their demand, but, on a more mature consideration, feared to ask him concerning his paying taxes on any pretence whatsoever. Jesus was, however, no stranger to what had happened, and the fear of Peter to ask him, and therefore turned the discourse to this subject by saying to him, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free;" insinuating that, as he was himself the Son of the great King to whom heaven, earth, and sea belong, he had no right to pay tribute to any monarch whatever, because he held nothing by a derived right. Or, if we suppose this contribution was made for the service and reparation of the temple, he meant that, as he was himself the Son of that Omnipotent Being to whom the tribute was paid, he could justly have excused himself. But the blessed Jesus was always careful not to give offence, and therefore sent Peter to the lake with a line and a hook, telling him that in the mouth of the first fish that came up he should find a piece of money equal to the sum demanded of them both. "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." (Matt. xvii. 27.)

Our Lord took this extraordinary method of paying the tribute money in this manner, because the miracle was of such a kind as could not fail

to demonstrate that he was the Son of the great Monarch worshipped in the temple, and who rules the universe. In the very manner, therefore, of paying this tribute he showed Peter that he was free from all taxes, and at the same time gave this useful lesson to his followers—that when their property is affected only in a small degree, it is better to recede a little from their just rights than to offend their brethren or disturb the state by obstinately insisting on them.

Notwithstanding our blessed Saviour had lately foretold his own sufferings and death, and though these melancholy accounts had greatly afflicted the minds of his disciples, yet their grief was of no long continuance, for within a few days they forgot the predictions of their Master, and disputed with each other about the chief posts of honour and profit in the Messiah's kingdom. This debate was overheard by the blessed Jesus, though he did not mention it till after the tax-gatherers were retired, when he asked them what they were disputing about on the way. This question rendered them all silent. They were fearful of discovering the cause that had given rise to the debate, as they knew it would draw on them a reprimand from their Master. Jesus, perceiving that they still continued silent, sat down, ordering them all to stand round him, and attend to what he was going to deliver. If any man, said the Saviour of the world, is ambitious of being the greatest person in my kingdom, let him endeavour to obtain that dignity by preferring others in honour, and doing them all the good offices in his power. "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last, and servant of all." (Mark ix. 35.)

The disciples were now convinced that it was in vain to conceal the subject of the debate that had happened on the way. Accordingly, they drew near to their Master, desiring him to decide a point which had often given occasion to disputes. "Who," said they, "is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matt. xviii. 1.) Jesus, to check these foolish emulations in his disciples, called a little child unto him and placed him in the midst, that they might consider him attentively; and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xviii. 3.) Unless ye be humbled by the power of Divine grace, and brought to a due sense of the vanity of all earthly preferments, riches, and honours, and become meek and humbled in spirit, ye shall be so far from becoming the greatest in my kingdom, that ye shall never enter its borders. But whosoever shall be satisfied with the station in which God has placed him, receive with meekness all the Divine instructions, however contrary to his own inclinations, and prefer others to himself, that man is really the

greatest in my kingdom. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xviii. 4.)

Our Saviour, to demonstrate how truly acceptable the beauty of the grace of humility is to the Almighty, took the child in his arms, declaring that whoever humbled themselves like a little child, and showed kindness to their fellow-creatures, should have the same kindness showed them in the great day of account, especially if they performed these worthy actions in obedience to his commands.

It seems from circumstances that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, might be principally concerned in this debate, for we find that John

Christ blessing little Children. (*Overbeck.*)

endeavoured to divert it by telling his Master they had seen one casting out devils in his name, and had forbidden him, because he did not join himself to their company; to which Jesus replied that they should not have forbidden him, since he must have entertained very high notions of their Master's power at seeing the devils leave the bodies of them on mentioning the name of Jesus. "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." (Mark ix. 39.)

You should, added the blessed Jesus, consider that every one who does not persecute us is a friend, and

that the ejection of devils in my name will advance my reputation and promote my interest, even though the exorcist and the devils themselves should design the contrary. He also told his disciples that the least degree of respect showed to him by any one, even though it should be no more than the giving a cup of cold water to his thirsty disciples, is acceptable to him, and should not fail of meeting with an adequate reward. "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." (Mark ix. 41.)

But, on the other hand, the least discouragement given to his disciples in the propagation of the gospel, come from what quarter it will, shall be punished with the greatest severity. "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." (Mark ix. 42.)

From this saying Jesus inferred that it was more advantageous to deny ourselves the highest enjoyments of this world, and to part with everything, however precious, represented by a hand, a foot, or an eye, than by these to cause the weakest of his friends to stumble. And as the disciples were appointed to sow the seeds of virtue and religion in the world, or, according to the metaphor, to salt the people for an offering to heaven, in allusion to sacrifice being salted at the temple, Jesus exhorted them to mortify themselves, that they might appear worthy of so high an office as that of salting mankind for the altar of heaven; for, as they were to be the salt of the earth, it was requisite they should themselves be filled with the spiritual salt of all the graces, and particularly the holy salt of love and peace, that they might, as far as possible, be free from the rottenness of ambition, pride, contention, and every evil work.

Pride is the source of numberless sins, and therefore the blessed Jesus cautioned his disciples, in the most solemn manner, to beware of that vice, assuring them that the meanest person is an object of the care of Providence, and "that their angels do always behold the face of my heavenly Father." Our blessed Saviour did not mean, by this expression, that every man who practises the duties of religion has a particular guardian angel assigned him; but, as all angels are sent forth as ministering spirits, they may be called his angels.

To show the concern of his Almighty Father for the least of his reasonable creatures, and the great value he sets upon the souls of the human race, our Saviour told them that he not only gave his highest angels charge concerning them, but had also sent his only-begotten Son to seek and to save that which was lost, and would share in the joy which the heavenly beings are filled with on their recovery. "How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of

them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." (Matt. xviii. 12—14.)

Having thus addressed the offending party, he turned himself towards his disciples, and gave them instructions with regard to the offended. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. xviii. 15—17.)

Try every measure to reclaim thy brother, and in order to this represent his fault to him privately. If this rebuke have the desired effect, thou hast brought him back to the paths which lead to happiness; but if this gentle method fail, two or more grave persons should join in the rebuke, that he may be convinced of the injury he has done thee. If he still remains obstinate, tell his offence to the church, whose sentence will sufficiently show that thou hast done thy duty, and that he alone is to blame. But if he is so hardened as not to be affected by the censure of the church, he is from thenceforth to be treated as the Pharisees treat the heathens and publicans; namely, as an incorrigible sinner, whose company and conversation, being contagious, ought to be shunned by all who have any love for virtue and religion.

Our Saviour now conferred the special power which he had previously confined to Peter on all his disciples. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven;" (Matt. xviii. 18;) that is, ye have free power to preach remission of sin through faith in the gospel and repentance unto life, and such decree will remain valid in the court of heaven, though passed here below.

But, on the other hand, if the offending brother continues impenitent after all the methods above described are tried, his guilt is bound the faster upon him, because, by the precepts of the gospel, none but penitents can obtain pardon.

Our blessed Saviour also added, as an encouragement to good men, that if they continued earnest in their endeavours to bring sinners to repentance, and offered up their prayers to the Almighty for assistance, he would always grant their petitions, provided they were agreeable to the wise ends of his providence. "Again I say

unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 19, 20.)

Peter had before heard his Master speak of the doctrine of frequent forgiveness, and imagined that what he had now so strongly inculcated might prove dangerous to society, and therefore thought it his duty to offer his objections. "Lord," said he, "how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" He thought it a strange doctrine which obliged him to forgive offences seven times repeated; but our blessed Saviour told him that he was very greatly mistaken; that he never intended to limit forgiveness to seven times, but that it ought to be extended even to seventy times seven.

This excellent moral precept he enforced by the parable of the two servants debtor to one lord, in order to show the necessity of forgiving the greatest injuries in every case where the offending party is sensible of his fault, and promises amendment, because on this condition alone our heavenly Father will forgive our offences. "Therefore," said the blessed Jesus, "is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king, that would take account of his servants." God is the great King and Sovereign of all creatures, and all are accountable to him as servants to a master. He will reckon with all, and happy are they who live sensible of this important truth. When he had begun to reckon, one servant was brought unto him who owed him an immense debt, "ten thousand talents"—a debt much greater than he was able to pay. His lord therefore commanded him, agreeably to the custom of those times, to be sold for a slave, and his "wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made."

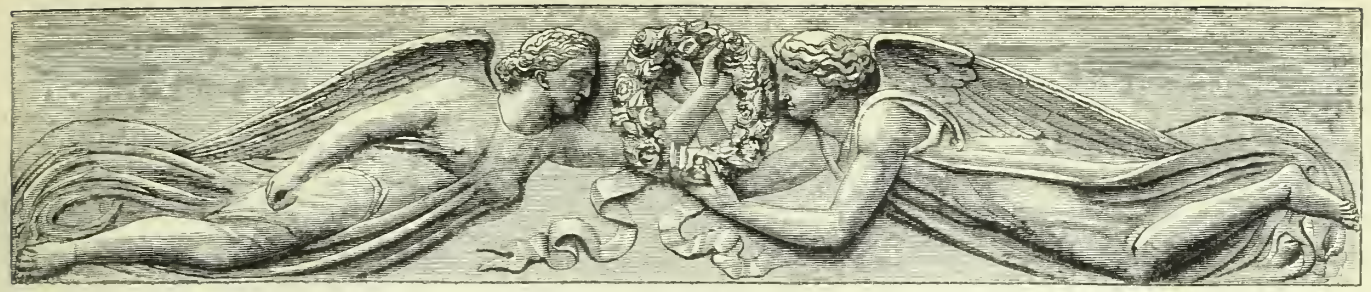
The servant, convinced of the justice of the sentence, and knowing he had nothing to hope for but from the mercy and clemency of his lord, fell down in the most humble manner, and importunately besought him, saying, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." The master, moved with compassion towards him, accepted of his humiliation, and, to make his happiness complete, loosed him from the sentence inflicted, and freely forgave him the enormous debt—an obligation surely sufficient to have melted the hardest heart into gratitude towards his lord, and the tenderest sympathy towards any of his brethren in distress. But alas! who is acquainted with the human heart? This very servant went out from the presence of his compassionate lord, and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him "an hundred pence"—a poor inconsiderable debt in comparison of what he himself owed his lord.

But behold the base inhumanity of this servant! He laid hands on the

poor debtor, seizing him violently by the throat, and saying, "Pay me that thou owest." His fellow-servant fell down at his feet, even as he had just before done at the feet of his lord, and besought him in the very same words he himself had so lately used: "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Such a similarity of circumstances, one would surely have thought, must have affected his stony heart, brought to remembrance his own late distress, and melted his soul into the like generous compassion which had flowed so sweetly from his lord to him. But his conduct is the very reverse; he would have no patience, he would show no pity: he went and cast the unhappy debtor into prison till he should pay the debt.

His fellow-servants, when they saw what was done, were exceedingly afflicted, and came and told their lord the whole transaction, upon which he summoned the unmerciful servant to appear before him, and, filled with indignation and abhorrence, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, how perverse is thy behaviour, how ungrateful and base thy proceeding! "I forgave thee all thy debt," that enormous debt thou owedst me, "because thou desiredst me:" I was moved to clemency and compassion by thy entreaties and distress: and "shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Shouldst not thou much rather have forgiven him who was thy fellow-servant, and owed thee so small a sum, when I, thy king and lord, had forgiven thee so immense a debt?

Having thus expostulated with him, his wrath was kindled, and he "delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise," added the Son of God, "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not one another your trespasses." (Matt. xviii. 34, 35.) And surely this awful threatening ought to strike the minds of fierce and implacable men with terror; for, whatever they may think, it will certainly in its full extent be inflicted upon all who refuse to obey the dictates of Divine mercy, and forgive not only their fellow-servants, but every brother in Christ who through weakness or inadvertence may have done them an injury either in person or property.



CHAPTER XVIII.

Our blessed Lord attends for the fourth time the celebration of the Passover at Jerusalem. He harangues the multitude at the solemn feast of tabernacles. Exempts the woman detected in adultery from the punishment annexed by the Jews to that crime. Escapes from the snares laid for him by the inveterate scribes and Pharisees.

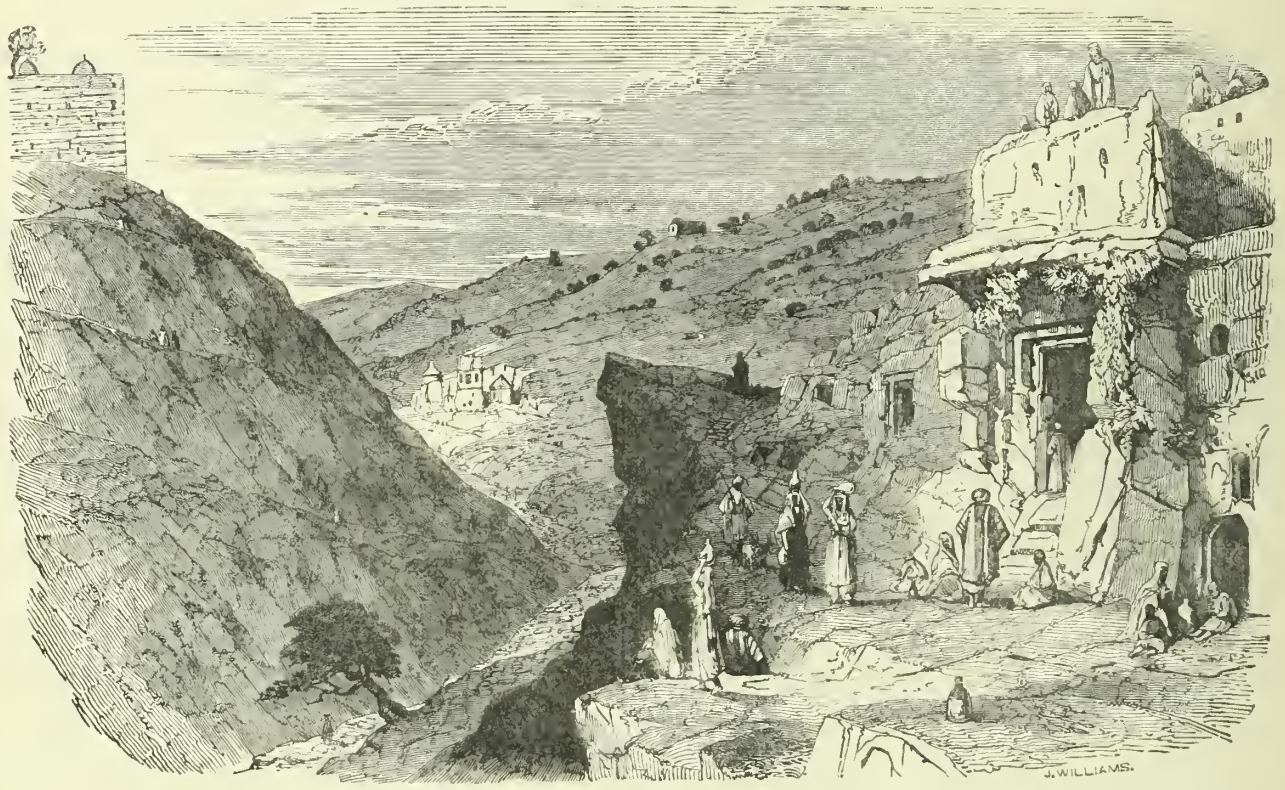
THE great Redeemer, having promoted his Father's work in Galilee, departed into Judea, passing through the country beyond Jordan, that the Jews who inhabited these distant parts might enjoy the unspeakable benefits of his discourses and miracles, and after sowing the seeds of eternal life and publishing the glad tidings of salvation in these remote countries, repaired to Jerusalem to celebrate the fourth Passover; but the malignity of the scribes and Pharisees was so great that he stayed but a short time in the capital, and then returned into Galilee, where the multitude again resorted to him, and he again instructed them in the paths that lead to everlasting life.

The feast of tabernacles now drew on, at which all the males of the Jewish nation capable of travelling repaired to Jerusalem, and dwelt in the tabernacles or booths, made of the boughs of trees, in commemoration of their fathers having had no other habitation during their forty years' sojourning in the wilderness. To this feast some of the kinsmen of the blessed Jesus desired he would accompany them, and there show himself openly to the whole nation of the Jews. They did not themselves believe that he was the great Prophet so long expected, and therefore condemned the method he pursued in his public ministry as altogether absurd.

They could not conceive what reasons he had for spending so much of his time in the deserts and remote corners of the kingdom, while he pretended to so public a character as that of the Redeemer of Israel. Jerusalem, the seat of power, was, in their opinion, much the properest place for him to deliver his doctrines

and work his miracles in the most public manner possible, before the great and learned men of the nation, whose decision in his favour would have great weight in increasing the number of his disciples, and inducing the whole nation to own him for the Messiah. "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him." (John vii. 3—5.)

Our Lord well knew the rancorous prejudice of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and therefore did not think proper to reside among them any



The Valley of Jehoshaphat.

longer than was absolutely necessary. They had more than once attempted his life, and therefore very little hopes remained that they would believe his miracles or embrace his doctrine; but, on the contrary, the greatest reason to think they would destroy him, if possible, before he had finished the work for which he assumed the veil of human nature, and resided among the sons of men. "My time," said the blessed Jesus to these unbelieving relations, "is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come." (John vii. 6—8.)

As if he had said, It is not proper for me to go before the feast begins, but you may retire to the capital whenever you please; the Jews are your friends—you have done nothing to displease them; but the purity of the doctrines I have preached to them, and the freedom with which I have reproved their hypocrisy and other enormous crimes, have provoked their malice to the utmost height; and therefore, as the time of my sufferings is not yet come, it is not prudent for me to go so soon to Jerusalem.

There was also another reason why our blessed Saviour refused to accompany these relations to the feast of tabernacles: the roads were crowded with people, and these gathering round him, and accompanying him to Jerusalem, would doubtless have given fresh offence to his enemies, and have in a great measure prevented his miracles and doctrines from having the desired effect. He therefore

Temple Wall, with remains of the Bridge.

chose to continue in Galilee till the crowd were all gone up to Jerusalem, when he followed as it were in secret, neither preaching nor working miracles by the way, so that no crowd attended him to the feast.

As Jesus did not go up openly to Jerusalem, so neither did he, on his arrival, repair to the temple, and there preach openly to the people. This gave occasion to several disputes among the Jews with regard to his character. Some affirmed that he was a true prophet, and that his absenting himself from the feast could be owing only to accident; while others as confidently asserted that he only deceived the people, and paid no regard to the institutions they had received from heaven.

But about the middle of the feast Jesus appeared openly in the temple, and taught the people, delivering his doctrines with such strength of reason and elegance of expression that his very enemies were astonished, knowing that he had never enjoyed the advantage of a learned education.

"Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" to which the great Redeemer of mankind replied, My doctrine was not produced by human wisdom; the sages of the world were not my instructors: I received it from heaven; it is the doctrine of the Almighty, whose messenger I am. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." (John vii. 16.)

Nor can he who is desirous of practising the doctrines I deliver, if he will lay aside his prejudices, and sincerely desire to be taught of God, be at a loss to know from whom my doctrines are derived, because he will easily discern whether they are conformable to the will of man or of God. It is no difficulty to discover an impostor, because all his precepts will tend to advance his own interest and gratify his pride; whereas all the doctrines delivered by a true prophet have no other end than the glory of God, however contrary they may prove to himself. "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." (John vii. 18.)

Our Lord was upbraided with impiety by some of the Jews, because he had healed on the Sabbath the impotent man in one of the porches of Bethesda, which they pretended was a violation of the law of Moses, and consequently what no prophet would be guilty of; in answer to which our blessed Saviour told them that however they might pretend to reverence the authority of Moses and his law, they made no scruple of violating the most sacred of his precepts: they had resolved to put him to death, directly contrary to every law of God and man, and, in order to execute their detestable scheme, were laying plots against his life.

The people replied, "Thou hast a devil, who goeth about to kill thee;" to which Jesus answered, I have done a miracle of an extraordinary kind on the Sabbath-day, which you think inconsistent with the character of a pious man, and therefore wonder how I could perform it. But surely Moses gave you the law of circumcision, and you make no scruple of performing the ceremony on the Sabbath-day, because it is a precept both of Moses and the fathers. Since, therefore, ye think yourselves bound to dispense with the strict observance of the Sabbath in order to perform a ceremonial precept, can you be angry with me because, in order to fulfil the great end of all the Divine laws, I have cured a man who was infirm in all his members, and even with far less bodily labour than you perform the ceremony of circumcision? Consider, therefore, the nature of the thing; divest yourselves of your prejudices, and the superstitious opinions taught by your elders, and judge impartially. "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because

it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the Sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John vii. 22—24.)

Notwithstanding the strength of this argument, several of our blessed Saviour's inveterate enemies asked, with sarcastical surprise, if the boldness of Jesus and the silence of the rulers proceeded from their being convinced that he was the Messiah; and at the same time, to deride his pretensions to that high character, said that they were acquainted both with his parents and relations, but that no man, when Christ appeared, would be able to tell from whence he came, founding their opinion on these words of the prophet Isaiah, "Who can declare his generation?" (Isa. liii. 8.) To which the blessed Jesus answered, that their knowing his parents and relations was no reason against his having the prophetical characters of the Messiah; adding, I am not come of myself, but sent from heaven by God, who has uttered nothing by his servants the prophets concerning the Messiah but what is true, and will all be fulfilled in me; but ye are totally ignorant of his gracious perfections and gracious counsels, and have no inclination to obey his just commands. You are really ignorant of what the prophets have delivered concerning the Messiah; for, had you understood their predictions, you would have known that one of his principal characters is to understand the perfections and will of God more fully, and explain them to the sons of men more clearly, than any other messenger ever before sent from the Most High. And would you attentively consider the doctrines I deliver, you would soon perceive this character remarkably fulfilled in me, and be convinced that I came from the Almighty God of Jacob.

This defence, however powerful, and his reasons, however solid, were far from disarming his enemies of their malice, for some of them were desirous of apprehending him; but Providence would not suffer any to lay hands on him, because the time of his sufferings was not yet come. Many of the people, however, convinced by the powerful miracle he had lately wrought, and the unanswerable reasons he had advanced in support of his character, believed on him, and affirmed publicly in the temple that he was the Messiah. "And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" (John vii. 31.)

The scribes and Pharisees were highly provoked at this attachment of the common people to Jesus; and accordingly, on the last and great day of the feast, they met in council, and sent several officers to apprehend

him, and bring him before them. Jesus, during these transactions in the council, continued in the temple teaching the people. My ministry, said he to the multitude, is drawing near its period, and therefore you should, during the short time it has to last, be very careful to improve every opportunity of hearing the word: you should listen with the greatest attention to every discourse, that your minds may be stored with the truths of the Almighty before I return to my Father; for after my departure you shall earnestly wish for the same opportunities of seeing me and hearing my instructions, but shall never obtain them. "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come." (John vii. 33, 34.)

The Jews, who did not understand that our blessed Saviour alluded to his own death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, whither their sins would not permit them to follow him, wondered at this doctrine, and imagined that he intended to leave Judea, and preach to their brethren dispersed among the Gentiles. But this supposition was not sufficient, because, if he did go and preach among the Gentiles, they thought it was not impossible for them to follow him thither. "Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?" (John vii. 35, 36.)

While the Divine Teacher was thus instructing the people in the temple, the water from Siloam was brought into the temple, according to the appointment of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, part of which they drank with loud acclamations, in commemoration of the mercy showed to their fathers, who were refreshed by a stream which miraculously flowed from a rock and relieved a whole nation, then ready to perish with thirst in an arid and sandy waste; and the other part they poured out as a drink offering to the Almighty, accompanying it with their prayers for the former or latter rain to fall in its season, the whole congregation singing the following passage: "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (Isa. xii. 3.)

It was the custom of the blessed Jesus to deliver moral instructions in allusion to any occurrences that happened; and accordingly he took this opportunity of inviting, in the most affectionate manner, all who were desirous of knowledge or happiness to come to him and drink, alluding to the ceremony they were then performing. And to encourage all such as were desirous of believing in him, he promised them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he represented under the similitude of a river flowing out of their belly. "In the last

day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John vii. 37, 38.)

During this discourse to the people the officers from the council came to apprehend him; but hearing that the topic he was discussing was a very singular one, and as he seemed to deliver his discourse with remarkable fervour, their curiosity induced them to listen some time to it before they laid hands on him. But the eloquent manner in which he delivered his subject melted away their rage; the sweetness of his pronunciation and the plainness and perspicuity of his discourse elucidated the beauties of truth, and caused them to shine before the understanding with their native lustre. Accordingly, his very enemies, who were come from the council on purpose to apprehend him, were astonished; the greatness of the subject, made as it were visible by the Divine speaker, filled their understandings; the warmth and tenderness with which he delivered himself penetrated their hearts; they felt new and uncommon emotions, and being overwhelmed with the greatness of their admiration, were fixed in silence and astonishment, condemning themselves for having undertaken the office, and soon returning to the rulers of Israel without performing it.

If our Lord had pleaded for his life before the officers of the council who were sent to apprehend him, the success of his eloquence, even in that case, had been truly wonderful; but in the case before us it was surely superior to all praise; for in a discourse addressed to others, and even on a spiritual subject, it disarmed a band of inveterate enemies, and made them his friends.

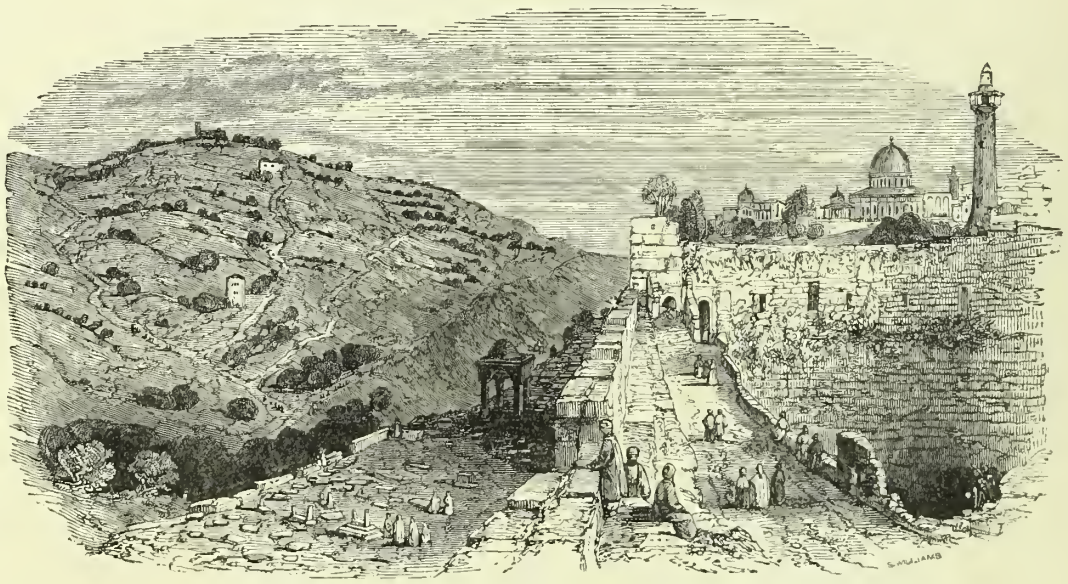
Nor were the officers the only persons alarmed by this discourse, for many of them declared that he must be one of the old prophets, and others that he was no other than the Messiah himself. Some, however, led away with the common mistake that he was born at Nazareth, asked, with disdain, if the Messiah was to come out of Galilee, and whether they would acknowledge a Galilean for the Messiah, when the Scripture had absolutely declared that he was to be born in Bethlehem, the native town of his father David. "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" (John vii. 40—42.)

Such were the dissensions on this subject that some of his enemies, knowing that the officers were sent to apprehend him, threatened to lay hands on Jesus; but the Almighty would not suffer them to execute their wicked design. "And some of

them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him." (John vii. 44.)

The officers now returned to the council, and were asked why they had not brought Jesus of Nazareth; to which they answered, "Never man spake like this man." This reply enraged the council, who reviled them for presuming to entertain a favourable opinion of one whom they had pronounced an impostor. It is strange, said they, that you, who are not ignorant of our sentiments concerning this person, should entertain a favourable idea of him. Have any persons of rank, or celebrated for their knowledge of the laws, believed on him? Are not his followers the very dregs of the people, who are totally ignorant of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah?

The officers made no answer to these railing accusations of their masters; but Nicodemus, a member of the council, arraigned their con-



Mount of Olives from the Wall of Jerusalem.

duct in a very poignant manner. "Does our law," says he, "condemn any man before he has been heard?" They had before condemned their officers for being ignorant of the law, when it appeared they were themselves far more ignorant in pretending to condemn a person before they had proved him guilty. They were acting directly contrary to the fundamental principles of the law of equity, at the time they boasted of their profound knowledge of its precepts.

Incensed at this reprimand of Nicodemus, they asked him, with an air of disdain and surprise, if he was also one of those mean persons who had joined together to support the pretences of a Galilean, though the Scriptures had plainly said that Bethlehem was the place of the Messiah's nativity; adding, that if he refused to listen to them, he should soon be convinced that the great Prophet mentioned by Moses was not to be born in Galilee. "Art thou

S. DE GHEULD PINXT. — H. JEENS SCULPT.

The Woman taken in Adultery

also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." (John vii. 52.)

Having made this reply to Nicodemus, the council broke up; and Jesus, who well knew their malicious intentions, retired to the Mount of Olives, where he spent the night with his disciples.

Our blessed Lord, early the following morning, returned to the temple, and again taught the people. The scribes and Pharisees now determined to render him odious to the multitude or obnoxious to the Roman governor, and therefore placed before him a woman that had been taken in the act of adultery, desiring his opinion what punishment she ought to suffer. "This woman," said they to Jesus, "was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" (John viii. 4, 5.)

Had our Lord disapproved the sentence of the law, they would doubtless have represented him to the multitude as a person who contradicted Moses, and favoured adultery, which could not have failed of rendering him odious to the people. On the other hand, had he ordered her to be stoned, it would have afforded a plausible pretence for accusing him to the Roman governor as a person who stirred up the people to rebellion, the Romans having now taken the power of life and death into their own hands.

But Jesus, who well knew their malicious intentions, made them no answer, but "stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not." (John viii. 6.)

They, however, still continued pressing him to give an answer; and at last Jesus, in allusion to the law, which ordered that the hands of the witnesses by whose testimony an idolater was convicted should be first upon him, said, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." Let those who are remarkably zealous for having justice executed upon others, at least take care to purify themselves from all heinous crimes.

This reply had its desired effect. The hypocritical scribes and Pharisees were convicted of sin by their own consciences, so that they immediately retired, fearing Jesus would have made their particular sins public. "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." (John viii. 9.)

The woman's accusers being all retired, Jesus told her that as no man had pronounced sentence of death upon her, neither would he pronounce it, but advised her to be very careful for the future to avoid the temptations which had induced her to commit so black a crime.

The wisdom, knowledge, and power of our blessed Saviour were eminently displayed on this occasion: his wisdom in defending himself against the

malicious attempts of his enemies, his knowledge in discovering the secrets of their hearts, and his power in making use of their own consciences to render their artful intentions abortive. It was therefore with remarkable propriety that the great Redeemer of mankind now called himself the "light of the world;" as if he had said, I am the spiritual sun that dispels the darkness of ignorance and superstition in which the minds of men are immersed, and enlightens the paths that lead to eternal life; nor shall any who follow me ever be involved in darkness. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John viii. 12.)

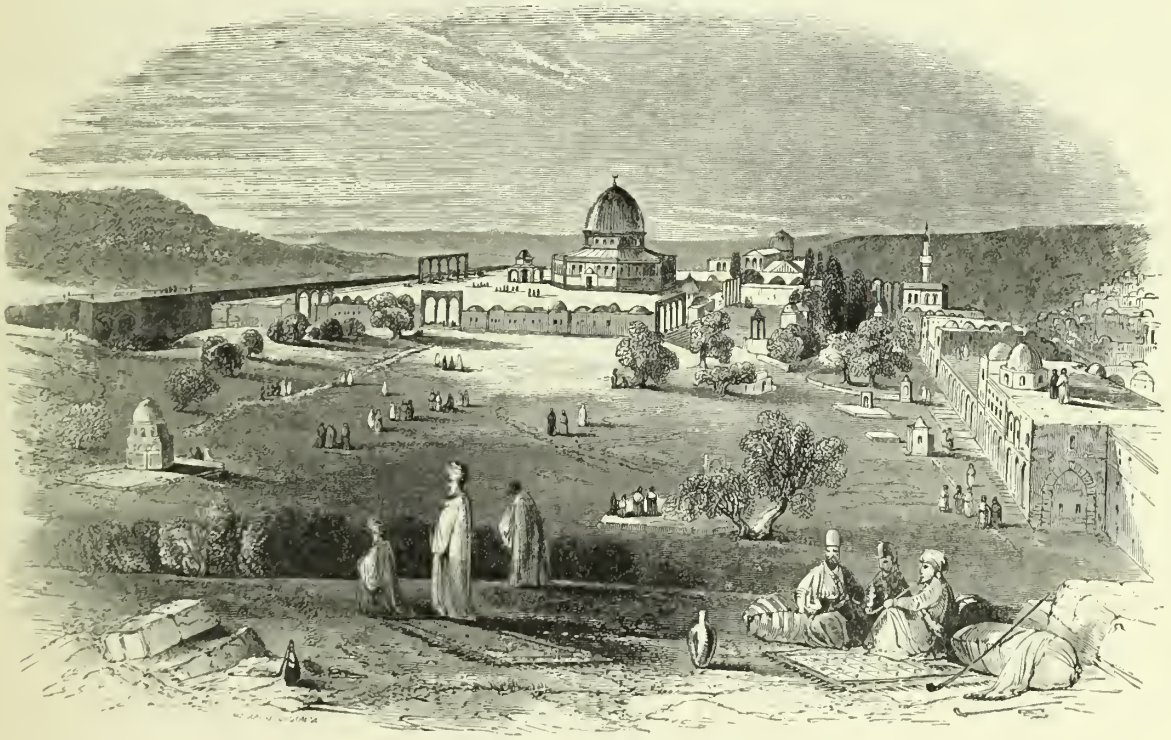
The assertion of our Lord highly provoked the Pharisees, who told him he must be a deceiver, because he boasted of himself; to which the great Redeemer of mankind replied, You are not to imagine that I called myself the light of the world from a principle of pride and falsehood; that title justly belongs to me; nor would you yourselves refuse to acknowledge it, did you know from what authority I received my commission, and to whom, when I have executed it, I must return. But these things ye are totally ignorant of, and therefore judge according to outward appearances, and condemn me because I do not destroy those who oppose, as you vainly think the Messiah will do those who shall refuse to submit to his authority. But the design of the Messiah's coming is very different from your mistaken notions; he is not to destroy but to save the children of men. "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man." (John viii. 14, 15.) He added that if he should condemn any person for unbelief, the condemnation would be just, because his mission was true, being confirmed by his own testimony and that of his Almighty Father, the God of Jacob, by whose authority and agreeably to whose will all his sentences would be passed. "And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." (John viii. 16.)

Having thus asserted the divinity of his mission, and shown that his judgment was just, he proceeded to inform them that the Father himself bore witness to the truth of his mission. You cannot, said he, justly complain, even if I should punish you for your unbelief, because you are by your own laws commanded to believe the testimony of two witnesses that my mission evidently is true. For the actions of my life, which are perfectly agreeable to the character of a messenger from heaven, bear sufficient witness of me; and the Father, by the miracles he has enabled me to perform, beareth witness of me; ye are, therefore, altogether culpable in objecting to my mission. "It is also written in your law, that the

testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." (John viii. 17, 18.)

The Jews then asked him, Where is thy Father, the other witness to whom thou appealest? Jesus replied, Your conduct sufficiently demonstrates that ye are strangers both to me and my Father; for had ye known who I am, you must have also known whom it is I call my Father: had ye been convinced that I am the Messiah, you must also have been convinced that the Father is no other than the Omnipotent Being who created and upholds all things by the word of his power. "Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (John viii. 19.)

This discourse, the evangelist tells



Enclosure of the Temple of Jerusalem.

us, was held in the treasury, or court of the women, where the chests were placed for receiving the offerings of all who came up to worship in the temple, and must therefore have been a place of great resort, being frequented by all, even the priests and rulers. But notwithstanding the public manner in which our blessed Saviour now asserted his claim to the character of the Messiah, no man attempted to seize him, Providence not suffering them to put their malicious designs in execution, because his "hour," or time of his sufferings, "was not yet come."

The debate being ended, Jesus again repeated what he had before told them, namely, that he should shortly depart from them, and that they should then

seek him, but not be able to find him. "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." (John viii. 21.) As if he had said, After my ascension into heaven, when the Roman armies shall spread horror and desolation in every corner of the land, ye shall then earnestly wish for the coming of the Messiah, in expectation of being delivered by his powerful arm from your cruel enemy; but ye shall then find your mistake; you shall die in your sins, and be for ever excluded from the mansions of happiness.

The Jews by no means comprehended this departure of which our Lord told them. They even fancied he would destroy himself, because they thought the only retreat where they could not find him was the gloomy habitation of the grave; to which the blessed Jesus replied, Your vile insinuation betrays at once the wickedness of your hearts and the baseness of your origin. Ye are from the earth, and therefore obnoxious to all the evil passions that infest human nature; and, from the dictates of your own hearts, you fancy that I can be capable of committing the horrid crime of self-murder. But my extraction is very different; it is from heaven, and consequently my mind is not tainted with the corruption of human nature, the source of temptation to every sin. You therefore must believe that I am the "bread of life," the heavenly manna, the light of the world, the true Messiah, if you are desirous of being cleansed from those pollutions which flow from your earthly origin; but if ye still continue in your unbelief, "you shall die in your sins."

The Jews now, in order to vindicate themselves, demanded what sort of person he pretended to be; to which Jesus answered, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning," —that is, at the beginning of this discourse,—"the light of the world;" adding, "I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." (John viii. 25, 26.)

This discourse, however plain it may appear, was not understood by the perverse Jews; they did not perceive "that he spake to them of the Father." But Jesus told them that when they had crucified him they would be convinced, by the miracles accompanying that awful hour,—the resurrection from the dead, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on his disciples, and the destruction of the Jewish nation,—who he was, and that the Father had sent him. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." (John viii. 28.)

He added that though he should be crucified as a malefactor, that punishment would not be inflicted on him as a consequence of his being deserted by his Father, because he would never leave him in any period

of his misery, or even at the hour of death, as he had always acted agreeably to his will.

These words induced many of the people to believe him to be the Messiah. Perhaps by "lifting him up" they did not understand his crucifixion, but his ascension to the throne of David, and hence supposed that he now entertained sentiments worthy of the Messiah, and were therefore very ready to acknowledge him as such, and believe the doctrine he had delivered concerning his mission. But Jesus told them that if they persevered in the belief and practice of his word, they should in reality become his disciples, have a title to that honourable appellation, be fully instructed in every doctrine of the

Thebes (the Ramseion).

gospel, and be not only freed from the slavery of sin and its consequences, but also from the ceremonial laws delivered by Moses. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John viii. 31, 32.)

The Jews, on hearing him mention that they should be made free, answered, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." This assertion, if taken literally, was absolutely false, the whole nation at that very time being in bondage to the Romans; nor were their ancestors any strangers to slavery, having severely felt the hand of tyranny both in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. The expression, therefore, must be taken in a metaphorical sense, to signify spiritual bondage: it was

a freedom by truth, a freedom in respect of religion, which they now asserted. They meant that they were the descendants of illustrious ancestors, and during the worst of times had preserved sentiments in religion and government worthy of the posterity of Adam; nor had the hottest persecution of the Assyrian kings been able to compel them to embrace the religion of the heathens. In respect of truth "we were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

In answer to this question, Jesus told them that they who give themselves up to a vicious course of life, and to the gratification of their sinful appetites, were absolutely slaves, and how far they might deserve that appellation it was incumbent on them to consider. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." And as a slave cannot be assured of the continuance of his master's favour, or certain of abiding continually in the family, so my Father can, when he pleases, discard such habitual sinners —deprive you of the external economy of religion, in which you so highly boast—as you have through sin rendered yourselves bondmen to his justice. If ye are desirous of becoming the children of God, and of remaining for ever in his family, you must submit to the authority of his Son, and embrace his doctrine, which will induce him to adopt you as coheirs with himself. It is he only that can make you free indeed, and place you in the city of the heavenly Jerusalem, without the least danger of being removed. I well know that ye are, in a natural sense, the seed of Abraham, but in a moral one the offspring of Satan; for many of you are desirous of destroying me, because I enjoin a greater degree of sanctity than you are willing to acquire. "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father." (John viii. 37—39.)

Notwithstanding their claim to immediate descent from that father of the faithful, Jesus told them that if they were the spiritual progeny of Abraham, they would resemble that great and good man in his righteousness; and therefore, instead of endeavouring to take away the life of a person who came with a revelation from God, they would believe on him, in imitation of Abraham, who was justly styled the father of the faithful and the friend of God. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham." (John viii. 39, 40.) Jesus added that their deeds sufficiently showed whose children they were, and from what stock they were descended—even from the great deceiver of mankind, who "goeth about like a roar-

ing lion, seeking whom he may devour."

The Jews at length discovered the drift of our Lord's meaning, and actually replied that they were undoubtedly in that sense the children of God, as they were certainly not born of fornication, alluding to the marriage covenant, which in Scripture is metaphorically said to subsist between God and the people of Israel, and by which their obligation to love, honour, and obey him was represented in a very lively manner. We are neither, said the Jews, idolaters ourselves, nor sprung from idolatrous parents; consequently we are doubtless, with respect to a spiritual descent, the children of God. "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." (John viii. 41.)

But Jesus told them that an outward profession of the true religion was of no consequence. They must "love it in deed and in truth," if they hoped to be in reality the children of God; and if they truly loved religion, they must love him who came down from heaven on purpose to reveal it to the sons of men, adding that he did not come of himself, but was sent by the great Creator of the universe. "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." (John viii. 42.)

But ye, continued the blessed Jesus, inherit the nature of your father, the devil, and therefore will continue to gratify the lusts ye have derived from him. He was an enemy and murderer of mankind from the beginning, and has ever since exerted his whole power to work their destruction, sometimes by seducing into sin by his falsities, and sometimes by instigating them to kill those whom God thought proper to send to reclaim them; and having early departed from holiness and truth, a habit of lying is become habitual to him. Being, therefore, a liar and the father of lying, when he speaketh a falsity he speaketh what is properly his own. But I tell you the truth, and therefore it is natural to think that ye will disbelieve me. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." (John viii. 44, 45.)

Though ye dare even to reject my doctrine, are any of you able to show that I have not received my commission from heaven, or that I have done anything that has a tendency to render me unworthy of belief? Can you show that I have taught false doctrines, reproved you unjustly for your actions, or been guilty myself of sin? If you are unable to do this, but, on the contrary, must acknowledge that my doctrine and life are such as become a messenger of God, what reason can ye pretend for not believing me? "And if," in affirming that I am per-

fectly free from sin, "I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Whoever is of God receives with the greatest humility whatever revelations God is pleased to make of himself by his messengers, and makes it his study and delight to obey all his commandments; but ye reject the revelations and precepts of the Almighty delivered by me, who came down from heaven for no other reason than because ye are not the children of God. "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." (John viii. 47.)

The Jews, still attached to their lineal descent, replied that his calling the descendants of Abraham the children of the devil was a sufficient

Burial of Jacob. (*G. Jäger.*)

proof that he was either a very profligate wretch himself, or instigated by some evil spirit. But Jesus told them that he was neither mad nor actuated by an evil spirit. On the contrary, he honoured his Father by speaking the words of truth which he had sent him to deliver, and therefore they dishonoured him in calling him by so opprobrious a title; adding that he did not, however, court their applause, nor fear their reproaches, though there was One concerned to vindicate his honour, and severely punish all who would dare to attack it.

Our Lord, having declared his mighty and Divine power, asserts the

happy effects of faith and obedience to the gospel. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." (John viii. 51.) On this declaration the Jews cried out, Now we sufficiently know that thou art possessed with a devil, for the most righteous persons that ever flourished among the sons of men are dead. Abraham, and the prophets, and other holy men, are all laid in the chambers of the dust, and yet thou hast the impudence and folly to affirm that whoever keeps thy precepts shall never die. Thou surely canst not think nor pretend to be more in favour with the Almighty than Abraham and the prophets were, who, though the strictest observers of the Divine precepts, could not obtain the privilege of being themselves exempt from the stroke of death, much less for their followers. "Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?" (John viii. 52, 53.)

In reply to this impertinent query the Messiah returned, If I should attempt to speak in praise of myself you would call it vain and foolish, and, like the Pharisees, tell me, "Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true." Instead, therefore, of giving you a full description of my dignity, I shall only inform you that it is my Father who speaketh honourably of me by the many miracles he enables me to perform. And surely this may be sufficient to convince you of what I have promised for my disciples, especially when I tell you that my Father is no other than the Almighty God of Jacob, whom all the descendants of Abraham pretend to worship. But though you vainly boast of worshipping my Father as your God, you are ignorant of him: you neither form just conceptions of him, nor worship him in the manner you ought. Your knowledge and actions, therefore, give a lie to your profession; but, on the contrary, I entertain proper ideas of him, and obey his precepts. You may, perhaps, construe this declaration as proceeding from vanity; but if I should say I do not form adequate conceptions of him, or acknowledge him as he deserves, I should be a liar like unto you. Even your father Abraham, of whom you so highly boast, earnestly desired to behold the time when I, the promised seed, should put on the veil of human nature, and convert all the nations of the world from their idolatry to the knowledge and worship of the true God. He earnestly desired to see the great transactions of my life, by which this invaluable blessing was to be procured for all the sons of men, and view the happy state of all nations when this blessing was bestowed upon them. This was granted him; he "saw it, and was glad." He was favoured with the ravishing prospect of these happy times, then concealed in the womb of futurity, and was

exceedingly transported with the scene. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John viii. 56.)

The Jews, still blind to the spiritual meaning of our Lord's words, concluded he had affirmed that he was before Abraham; and knowing that he was not yet fifty years old, considered it as absolutely ridiculous. They had no conception of his Divine nature, though he had so often told them he was the Son of God, and consequently existed with the Father long before this world was called from its primitive chaos. This crass stupidity and perverseness induced the Saviour of the world to assert his dignity in still plainer terms: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." (John viii. 58.)

The Jews, incensed at our Lord's prior claim to Abraham in point of existence, rushed on him, and attempted to stone him; but Jesus, by rendering himself invisible, passed unhurt through the crowd, and retired out of the temple.

Cedars of Lebanon.

CHAPTER XIX.

Our Lord continues to work miracles in confirmation of his mission and doctrine. Calls forth and sends out seventy disciples. Preaches to the people of Judea by way of parables.

THE great Preacher of Israel, having defeated the cruel designs of the obstinate Jews, was passing through the city, and saw in one of the streets a man who had been blind from his birth. The sight of so affecting an object could not fail to excite the compassion of the benevolent Saviour of mankind. Nor could the affronts and indignities he had just received from the Jews hinder him from "working the works of him that sent him," and dispensing blessings on that rebellious and ungrateful nation. Accordingly, he beheld this poor blind man, not with a transient view, but fixed on him the eyes of his Divine compassion, and presented him with the riches of his adorable love.

The disciples, observing the affectionate regard of their Master to this object of compassion, and probably imagining that he was going to extend his usual mercy to this unfortunate object, asked their Master whether his blindness was occasioned by his own sin or the sin of his parents. They had often heard their Master say that afflictions were commonly the punishment of particular sins, and had learned from the law of Moses that sin was the fruitful source of evil, and that the Lord punished the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Their Master kindly answered that neither his own nor the sins of the parents were the immediate cause of this peculiar punishment, but that he was born blind, "that the works of God should be made manifest in him;" particularly his sovereignty in bringing him blind into the world, his power in conferring the faculty of sight upon him, and his goodness in bearing witness to the doctrine by which men are to be saved.

We may learn by this pertinent reply of the Saviour of the world

that a curious inquiry into the afflictions of other men may be safely avoided, and that we ought to suppose every calamity subservient to the glory of Omnipotence, never imputing to their personal sins whatever miseries we behold in others, lest, like the disciples in the present case, we assign that to sin which owes its origin to the glory of our Maker.

Having assigned the cause of this person's blindness, namely, "that the works of God should be made manifest in him," Jesus added, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work;" intimating to his disciples and all the sons of men his unwearied labour in the work of his Almighty Father. In this he was occupied day and night during the time of his sojourning in the flesh. To this alone he directed all his thoughts and all his intentions. This he esteemed even as his meat and drink; and for this he suffered the neglect of his ordinary food, that he might finish the blessed, the beneficent work of human salvation—a work to accomplish which he left the courts of heaven, and, during the execution of it, went about doing good.

It was now the Sabbath-day, and the blessed Jesus was going to perform a miracle in which there was to be a small degree of servile work, and therefore he told his disciples that they need not be surprised to see him work miracles of that kind on the Sabbath-day; for though they should imagine that he might defer them till the day of rest was over, his time on earth was so short that he was obliged to embrace every opportunity that offered of working miracles. Perhaps he chose to perform this work on the Sabbath because he knew the Pharisees would for that reason inquire into it with the utmost attention, and consequently render it more generally known.

But however this be, our blessed Saviour, who was now going to confer sight on one that was born blind, took occasion from thence to speak of himself as one appointed to give light also to the minds of men involved in darkness. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

It appears from hence that our Saviour's miracles were designed not only as proofs of his mission, but also as specimens of the power he possessed as the Messiah. For example, by feeding the multitude with the meat that perished, he signified that he was come to quicken and nourish mankind with the bread of life, that sovereign cordial and salutary nutriment of the soul. His giving sight to the blind was a lively emblem of the efficacy of his doctrine to illuminate the blinded understandings of men. His healing their bodies represented his power to heal their souls, and was a specimen of his authority to forgive sins, as it was a real, though a partial, removal of its punishment. His casting out devils was an earnest of his final victory

over Satan and all his powers. His raising particular persons from the dead was the beginning of his triumph over death, and a demonstration of his ability to accomplish a general resurrection; and, in a word, his curing all promiscuously who applied to him showed that he was come not to condemn the world, but to save even the chief of sinners. Accordingly, at or soon after performing these miracles, when the memory of them was fresh in the minds of his hearers, we often find him turning his discourse to the spiritual things they represented. But to return from this digression.

Having declared the salutary design of his coming into the world, "he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is, by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." (John ix. 6, 7.)

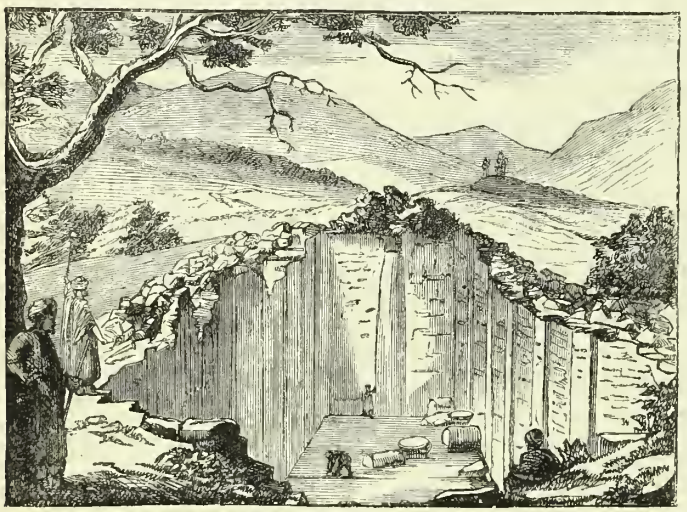
From former examples it is evident that our blessed Saviour could as easily have performed this miracle without the assistance of any external means. Indeed, those the great Redeemer of mankind made use of on this occasion were so far from being likely to effect the cure, that they seemed properly adapted to produce a quite contrary effect. We must, therefore, conclude that they were intended to direct our attention to higher mysteries, and show us, as in a glass, that it is no other than the same Divine person who at first created man out of the dust of the earth, and gave sight to his eyes, that now restores and regenerates lapsed mankind, and opens the eyes closed with the black cement of sin.

This person seems to have known the power of the Redeemer, or at least to have been informed by some person near him who Jesus was, the fame of whose miracles had been published in every corner of Judea. Indeed, we cannot otherwise account for the implicit and ready obedience paid him by the blind man, who was so amply rewarded for his faith and confidence by receiving the invaluable gift of sight.

This miraculous operation could not fail of producing a general curiosity and surprise, and induced those who had seen this blind man in his dark and deplorable condition to be very particular in their inquiries into the means of so singular a miracle. It was doubtless the subject of general conversation, and it is natural to think should also have proved the means of a general conversion; but, as too frequently happens, a perverse curiosity prevented its salutary effects upon their souls. Unbelief and hardness of heart led some of them even to doubt of the plainest fact: a fact the most evident and indisputable, and plainly the work of the Divinity, led others to persecute at once both the object and the author of it! "The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that

sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he." (John ix. 8, 9.)

The man, transported with gratitude and joy, perceiving his neighbours doubted of the identity of his person, proclaimed himself to be the very same whom they lately saw begging in total darkness. I am he thus wonderfully blessed with sight by the peculiar mercy of the Almighty! I am he who was blind from my birth, whom ye have all seen, and many relieved in my miserable dis-



Pool of Siloam.

tress! I am he who was even from my mother's womb involved in pitchy darkness, but now enjoy the enlivening light of day!

So genuine an acknowledgment of the fact excited in them curiosity to know how this admirable effect was produced. "How were thine eyes opened?" To this question he readily replied, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." (John ix. 11.) They then asked him where the person was who had performed so stupendous a work, to which the man answered, "I know not;" for Jesus had retired while the man went to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam, probably to avoid the applauses which would naturally have been given him, and which we see through the whole gospel he generally studied to avoid.

The neighbours, either stimulated by envy or excited by a desire of having the truth of this extraordinary event searched to the bottom, brought the man before the council as the proper judges of this affair. Accordingly, he was no sooner placed before the assembly than the Pharisees began to inquire of him "how he had recovered his sight." Nothing daunted by this awful assembly, though terrible to a man of his mean circumstances, he boldly answered, "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see." (John ix. 15.)

On hearing this account of the miracle, the Pharisees declared that the author of it must be an impostor, because he had, by performing it, violated the Sabbath-day. But others, more candid in their way of thinking, gave it as their opinion that no deceiver could possibly work a miracle of that kind, because it was too great and beneficial for any evil being to have either the inclination or power to perform.

The court being thus divided in their opinion with regard to the character of Jesus, they asked the

man himself what he thought of the person who had conferred on him the blessing of sight, to which he boldly and plainly answered, "He is a prophet." But the Jews, hoping to prove the whole a cheat, started another objection, namely, that this person was not born blind, though all his neighbours had already testified the truth of it. Accordingly, they called his parents, and asked them whether he was their son, if he had been born blind, and by what means he had obtained his sight; to which they answered that he was truly their son, and had been born blind; but with regard to the manner in which he received his sight, and the person who had conferred it on him, they could give no information: their son was of age, and he should answer for himself. "These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." (John ix. 22.)

This proves that the convictions of conscience act powerfully on the mind. The parents of this blind man well knew by what means their son had received his sight; and, like him, they should have gloried in the Divine Hand that had wrought so marvellous a work, and dared to have confessed him before all men, whatever dangers might have threatened them. Let us learn from hence to fear our own and to pity human frailty, and to implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit to give us courage and resolution in the day of trial; and let us take care not to love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

The Pharisees, finding all attempts either to discredit or disprove the fact useless, had recourse to their usual method of calumniating the author of it. They called again "the man that was born blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner;" (John ix. 24;) to which the man boldly answered these rulers of Israel, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." (John ix. 25.)

This reply prevailed not with the obstinate Jews: they were desirous of confounding him with repeated questions and the art of sophistry, and accordingly asked him, "What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?" They had before asked these questions, but now proposed them a second time in order that the man, by repeating his account of the servile work performed at the cure, might become sensible that Jesus had thereby violated the Sabbath, and consequently must be an impostor. Thus the enemies of our dear Redeemer would gladly have prevailed on the person who had received the invaluable gift of sight to join with them in the judgment they passed on the great Person who had wrought so stupendous a miracle. But their obstinacy in denying the truth appeared so criminal to him that he

boldly answered, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?" (John ix. 27.)

The council were highly exasperated at this retort. "They reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is." (John ix. 28, 29.)

The poor man, incensed at their unbelief and hardness of heart, replied, It is very strange that you should not acknowledge the Divine mission of a teacher who performs such astonishing miracles, for common sense sufficiently declares that God never assists impostors in working miracles; and accordingly there cannot be found a single example since the creation of the world of any such person opening the eyes of one born blind. My opinion, therefore, is, that if this man had not been sent by God he could not work any miracle at all. "The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." (John ix. 30—33.)

The honest man's arguments, though plain, were powerful, and founded upon truths they could not deny. They all owned that God heareth not sinners; they all knew that God had heard Jesus by the miracle he had wrought, which was a fact proved beyond any possibility of doubt, and was such as never any man performed: it therefore undeniably followed that Jesus was not a sinner, but sent from God, since otherwise he could do nothing.

The Pharisees were not ignorant that this argument was conclusive; they felt its whole force, and well knew that it could not be resisted. Accordingly, they did not attempt to answer it, but had recourse to punishment and abusive language. Thou wicked, illiterate, impudent mortal, said they, whose understanding is still as blind as thy body lately was, and who wert born under the heaviest punishment of sin, dost thou pretend to instruct in a matter of this kind the guides of the people, and those who have rendered themselves eminent for their knowledge in the law? "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?"

After their presumptuous taunts the evangelist adds that "they cast him out;" that is, they passed on him the sentence of excommunication, which was the highest punishment they had power to inflict. But though he was cut off from the Jewish society, the Almighty thought proper to unite him to one where no unjust sentences can ever be passed, nor any member be ever separated during a joyful eternity.

The presumption of the Pharisees should teach us to contemplate the various arts and subtle endeavours of all the adversaries and enemies of the gospel and cross of Christ, and not be surprised to find them, though in different shapes, employed against ourselves, if we zealously embrace the truth of Christ, as well as against all who are not afraid to confess before all men the glory of him who hath opened their eyes. It is impossible that the world should love those who boldly declare that its works are evil. Let us not, therefore, be shaken when we come to experience it, but learn from this blind man freely and openly to confess the faith, and to declare the power of that God who hath brought us from darkness into his marvellous light, and turned our feet into the way of peace.

The feast of dedication now drew near. This solemnity was not ap-

Lower Pool of Gihon, near the Tomb of David.

pointed by Moses, but by that heroic reformer, Judas Maccabeus, in commemoration of his having cleansed the temple and restored its worship, after both had been polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes.

Although this feast was merely of human institution, Jesus determined to be present at it, even though he knew that further attempts would be made against his life. His public ministry was, indeed, now drawing near its period; and therefore the blessed Jesus would not omit any opportunity of preaching to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and of doing good to the children of men. Nor did he now, as he had formerly done, travel privately to the capital, but openly declared his intention of going to Jerusalem, and set forward on his journey with great courage and resolution.

The road from Galilee to Jerusalem

lay through Samaria, the inhabitants of which entertained the most inveterate hatred against all who worshipped in Jerusalem. Jesus, being no stranger to this disposition of the Samaritans, thought proper to send messengers before him, that they might, against his arrival, find reception for him in one of the villages. The prejudiced Samaritans, finding that the intention of his journey was to worship in the temple at Jerusalem, refused to receive either him or his disciples into their houses.

The messengers, being thus disappointed, returned to Jesus, and gave him an account of all that had passed, at which James and John were so exceedingly incensed that they proposed to their Master to call for fire from heaven in order to destroy such inhospitable wretches, alleging, in excuse for such violent proceedings, the example of the prophet Elijah: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (Luke ix. 54.)

Our Lord, desirous of displaying an example of humility on every occasion, sharply rebuked them for entertaining so unbecoming a resentment for this offence. "Ye know not," said he, "what manner of spirit ye are of." Ye are ignorant of the sinfulness of the disposition ye have now expressed; nor do ye consider the difference of times, persons, and dispensations. The severity exercised by Elijah on the men who came from Ahab to apprehend him was a just reproof to an idolatrous king and people, very proper for the times, and very agreeable to the character both of the prophet who gave it and of the offenders to whom it was given, and at the same time not unsuitable to the Mosaic dispensation. But the gospel breathed a very different spirit, and the intention of the Messiah's coming into the world was not to destroy but to save the lives of the children of men.

Ye wise of this world, who reject saving knowledge, behold here an instance of patience under a real and unprovoked injury which you cannot parallel among all your boasted heroes of antiquity—an instance of patience which expressed infinite sweetness of disposition, and should be imitated by all the human race, especially by those who call themselves the disciples of Christ!

Being denied reception by the inhospitable inhabitants of this Samaritan village, Jesus, attended by his disciples, directed their way towards another, and as they travelled a certain man said to him, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." But Jesus, to whom the secret purposes of all hearts were open, knowing he only desired the riches and honours of the Messiah's kingdom, thought proper to make him sensible of his mistake, and accordingly said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Luke ix. 58.) I am so far from boasting of a temporal

kingdom, and the power and pomp attending it, that I have not even the accommodations provided by nature for the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. They have safe and secure retreats; but the Son of man is destitute of an habitation.

Jesus, in the course of his wandering, met with one who had formerly been his disciple, and ordered him to disengage himself from all worldly employments, and to follow him; but he was desirous of excusing himself for the present, under the pretence that he was bound by the ties of gratitude to continue with his aged father till death had put a period to his existence, and he had laid his remains in the sepulchre of his ancestors. "Lord," said he, "suffer me first to go and bury my father;" to which Jesus answered, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." (Luke ix. 59, 60.) Let those that are immersed in worldly affairs follow the affairs of the world; but those who have embraced the doctrines of the gospel do everything in their power to spread the glad tidings of salvation in every corner of the earth.

A third person offered to follow him, provided he would give him the liberty to return to his house and take leave of his family; but Jesus told him that he should not suffer any domestic affairs to interfere with the care of his salvation; that the calls of religion were too pressing to admit of the least delay or excuse whatever; and that all who set themselves to seek the welfare of their souls should pursue the work assiduously, without looking carelessly around them, as if they were regardless of the work they had undertaken to perform. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke ix. 62.)

As our blessed Saviour's ministry was from this time till its final period to be confined to Judea and the countries beyond Jordan, it was necessary that some harbingers should be sent into every town and village he was to visit, to prepare his way. Accordingly, he called his seventy disciples unto him, and after instructing them in the duties of their mission and the particulars they were to observe in their journey, he sent them into different parts of the country, to those particular places whither he himself intended to follow them, and preach the doctrines of the gospel to the inhabitants.

Our Lord, according to his own declaration, despatched these disciples on the same important message as he had done the twelve before.

The harvest was plenteous in Judea and Perea, as well as in Galilee, and the labourers also few; and being never more to preach in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, the cities wherein he had usually resided, he could not help reflecting on the reception he himself had met with from the inhabitants of those cities. He foresaw the terrible consequences that would flow from their rejecting his

doctrine, and the many kind offers he had made them. He was grieved for their obstinacy, and, in the overflowing tenderness of his soul, he lamented the hardness of their hearts. "Woe," said he, "unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell;" (Luke x. 13—15;) to which our Saviour added, as some consolation to his disciples, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." (Luke x. 16.)

Such a token of heavenly regard could not fail of comforting the seventy under the ill-usage they expected to meet with during the course of their mission. They well knew that the preaching of Christ himself had been often despised, and often unsuccessful, with respect to many of his hearers; and therefore they had not the least reason to expect that they should find a more welcome reception than their Master.

The seventy disciples, having received their instructions and the power of working miracles from the Messiah, departed to execute their important commission in the cities and villages of Judea and Perea; and after visiting the several places, publishing the glad tidings of salvation, and working many miracles in confirmation of their mission, they returned to their Master with great joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name."

From this appeal it seems that they knew not the extent of their delegated power, and were pleasingly surprised to find the apostate spirits tremble at their command; to which their great Master replied, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." You will be no longer astonished that the devils are subject to the power I have given you, when I tell you that their prince is not able to stand before me; and accordingly, when I first put on the veil of human nature to destroy him and his works, I saw him, with the swiftness of the lightning's flash, fall from heaven; adding, in order to increase their joy and prove that he had really cast Satan down from the seats of heaven, that he would enlarge their power. "Behold," says he, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." (Luke x. 19.)

Lest they should exult beyond measure in the honour thus conferred on them, which was merely temporary, our Lord adds: "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Luke x. 20.)

Nor could the blessed Jesus reflect on the unsearchable wisdom and

Sebaste

goodness of the Divine dispensations to mankind without feeling extraordinary joy, so that his beneficent heart overflowed with strains of gratitude. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Luke x. 21.)

When the disciples had executed their commissions Jesus left Samaria, and retired into Judea, and in the way was met by a certain lawyer, or scribe, who, being desirous of knowing whether the doctrines preached by Jesus were the same with those before delivered by Moses, asked him what he should do to inherit eternal life. It is really amazing that any mortal should ask a question like this, with a view to tempt, not to be instructed! This was, however, the case; but the blessed Jesus, though no stranger to the most secret thoughts of the heart, did not reply, as he had before done to the Pharisees, "Why temptest thou me, thou hypocrite?" he turned the scribe's weapons against himself. What, said he, is written in the law, of which thou professest thyself a teacher? How readest thou? That law will teach thee what thou must do to be saved; and happy will it be for thee if thou compliest with its precepts. The scribe answered, It is there written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." (Luke x. 27.)

Our Lord then shows the strength and spirituality of the law: "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." Perform these commands, and thou hast fulfilled the duties of an Israelite; for on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Where is the man that can fulfil the law? The lawyer, who in all probability expected no such answer, being conscious of his defects, and consequently of the impossibility of obtaining eternal life on these conditions, was willing, as the sacred historian informs us, to justify himself; was willing to stifle the rising suggestions of his own conscience, and at the same time to make a show of his own devotion; and in order to this he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"—a question very natural to be asked by a bigoted Jew, whose narrow notions led him to despise all who were not of his own fold, all who were not the natural descendants of his father Abraham.

To remove their obstinate attachment to their own principles, open their hearts to a more generous and noble way of thinking, and show them the only foundation of true love, and the extensive relation they and all mankind stand in to each other, our Saviour delivered the following most beautiful and instructive parable.

A certain person, in his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, had the misfortune to fall into the hands of

robbers, who, not content with taking his money, stripped him of his raiment, beat him in a deplorable manner, and left him for dead. While he continued in this miserable condition, utterly incapable of assisting himself, a certain priest happened to travel the same road; "and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side." So little compassion had these ministers of religion for a brother in the most deplorable circumstances of distress, that they continued their journey without offering to assist so miserable an object, notwithstanding their sacred characters obliged them to perform, on every occasion, the tender offices of charity and compassion. It was a brother, a descendant of Abraham in distress; and therefore those hypocrites could offer no reasons to palliate their inhumanity. Their stony hearts could behold the affecting object of an unfortunate Israelite lying in the road naked and cruelly wounded, without being the least affected with his distress.

The Good Samaritan.

Though these teachers of religion were hypocrites, and wholly destitute of grace and charity, compassion glowed in the heart of a Samaritan, who, coming to the spot where this helpless object lay, ran to him; and though he found him to be a person of a different nation, and one who professed a religion opposite to his own, yet the hatred which had been instilled into his mind from his earliest years, and every objection arising from the animosity subsisting between the Jews and Samaritans, were immediately silenced by the tender sensation of pity awakened by the sight of such complicated distress; his bowels yearned towards the miserable object; though a Jew, he flew to him, and assisted him in the most tender manner.

It was the custom in these Eastern countries for travellers to carry their provisions with them; so that this compassionate Samaritan was enabled, though in the desert, to give the wounded man a little wine to recruit his spirits. He also bound up his wounds, pouring into them wine and oil, placed him on his own beast, and walked himself on foot to support him. In this manner he conducted

him to an inn, took care of him during the night, and in the morning, when business called him to pursue his journey, recommended him to the care of the host, left what money he could spare, and desired that nothing might be denied him, for whatever was expended he would repay at his return.

Having finished the parable, Jesus turned himself to the lawyer, and asked him, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" The lawyer, struck with the truth and evidence of the case, replied, without the least hesitation, "He that showed mercy on him;" upon which Jesus replied, "Go, and do thou likewise." Perform all the good actions in thy power, extend thy kindness to every one who stands in need of thy assistance, whether he be an Israelite, a heathen, or a Samaritan. Consider every man as thy neighbour in respect to works of charity, and make no inquiry with regard to his country or religion, but only with regard to his circumstances.

On examination of the particulars of this beautiful parable, we shall find that it is composed in the finest manner to work the conviction designed, so that the lawyer, however desirous of considering those of the Jewish religion only as his neighbours, it was impossible for him to do it on this occasion. The Jews had long considered the favours of a Samaritan as a more detestable abomination than the eating of swine's flesh; yet, notwithstanding this prepossession, the lawyer was obliged to acknowledge that neither the priest nor the Levite, but the travelling Samaritan, by discharging the great office of humanity to the Jew in distress, was truly his neighbour; that the like humanity was due from any Israelite to a Samaritan in the like distressed circumstances, and consequently that men are neighbours, without any regard to country, kindred, language, or religion.

Mankind are intimately connected by their common wants and their common weaknesses. Providence has formed them in such a manner that they cannot subsist without the assistance of each other; and consequently the relation subsisting between them is as extensive as their natures, and their obligations to assist each other by mutual good offices as strong as the necessities of every individual. Our blessed Saviour has, therefore, by this admirable parable shown that the heart is the seat of genuine grace, and that good principles will ever produce good actions.

CHAPTER XX.

The humble Jesus resides with Martha and Mary, two obscure women of Bethany. Improves a circumstance which occurred at the feast of dedication. Prescribes a mode of prayer to his disciples and future followers Revisits some of the Pharisaical tribe.

THE feast of the dedication approaching, Jesus turned his course towards Jerusalem, and in the evening came to the house of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, at Bethany. Martha was desirous of expressing her regard for the Divine guest by providing for him and his disciples the best entertainment in her power. But her sister, who was of a more contemplative disposition, sat quietly at the feet of Jesus, listening with the utmost attention to his doctrine. For the great Redeemer of mankind never omitted any opportunity of declaring the gracious offers of the Almighty, and his unspeakable love for the children of men. Martha, being greatly fatigued with the burden of the service, complained to Jesus of the little care Mary took to assist her. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." (Luke x. 40.)

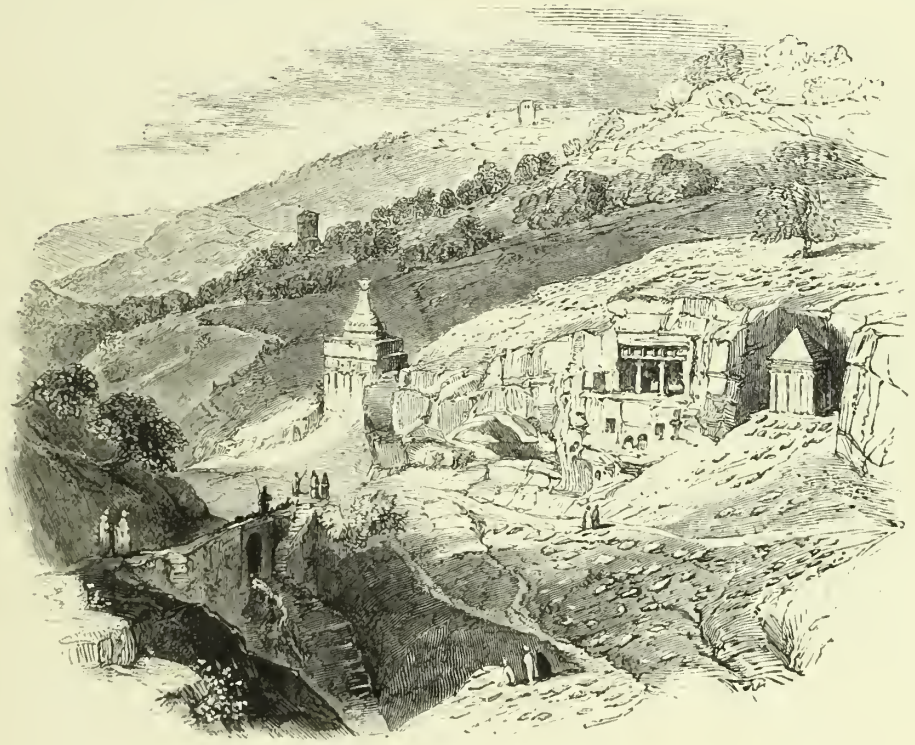
But Martha's officiousness incurred our Lord's reproof, who commended Mary for her attentive application to his doctrine. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke x. 41, 42.)

When Jesus repaired to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of dedication he was informed that the beggar he had restored to sight at the feast of tabernacles was by the council cast out of the synagogue. This information excited the pity of the Son of God, and he resolved to make him full amends for the injury he had suffered. It was not long before he met the suffering person, and said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said,

Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." (John ix. 35—38.)

We have hinted that the beggar was thoroughly convinced that the person who opened his eyes was a messenger from heaven; it is therefore no wonder that, as soon as he knew that Jesus was the person who had performed so great a work, he readily believed him to be the Son of God.

Our Saviour, having thus given the poor man ample proof of his Messiahship, directed his discourse to the people, and said unto them, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be



Tombs in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

made blind." (John ix. 39.) The meaning of our Saviour, though he alluded to the blind man, was spiritual. He did not intend to represent the design of his coming, but the effect it would have on the minds of men, as it would demonstrate what character and disposition every person possessed. The humble, the docile, and the honest, though they were immersed in the night of darkness with regard to religion and the knowledge of the Scriptures, should be enlightened by his coming, as the blind man had enjoyed the invaluable gift of sight from his hands; but those who were wise, learned, and enlightened in their own opinion should appear in their true character, absolutely ignorant, foolish, and blind.

The Pharisees, who happened to be

present when he spake these words to the people, imagined that he intended to throw a reflection on their sect, which the common people, from their skill in the law, held in great veneration. Accordingly, they asked him with disdain, "Are we blind also?" Dost thou place us, who are teachers, and have taken such pains to acquire the knowledge of the Scriptures, on a level with the vulgar? To which Jesus answered, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." If ye had not enjoyed the faculties and opportunities of discerning the proofs of my mission, you might have been considered as blind; but as ye are superior to the vulgar in point of learning, and at the same time your hearts are averse from acknowledging the truth, your enlightened understanding will only aggravate your guilt.

Having condemned the obstinacy and prejudice of this sect in rejecting the most evident tokens of the divinity of his mission, he continued the reproof by describing the characters of a true and false teacher. It was our Lord's custom always to allude to objects before him; and, being now in the outer court of the temple, near the sheep, which were there exposed to sale for sacrifice, he compared the teachers among the Jews to shepherds, and the people to sheep—a metaphor often used by the old prophets. He considered two kinds of bad shepherds or teachers; the one who, instead of entering in by the door to lead the flocks to the richest pastures, entered some other way, with an intention only to kill, to steal, and to destroy; the other who, though they entered by the door to feed their flocks with the dispositions of hirelings, yet when the wolf appeared they deserted the sheep, having no love for any but themselves. By the former he plainly alluded to the Pharisees, who had cast the man born blind out of the synagogue for no other reason than because he would not act contrary to the dictates of his conscience, and agree with them in declaring Jesus to be an impostor. But though they had cast him out of their church, Christ received him into his, which is the true church, the spiritual enclosure where the sheep go in and out, and find pasture.

To illustrate the allusion, it should be observed that the sheep which were brought to be sold for sacrifice were enclosed in little folds within the outer court of the temple, so that the shepherd himself could not enter till the porter had opened the door. And from this circumstance the following parabolical discourse may be easily understood: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." (John x. 1.) Believe me that whosoever in any age of the church assumed the office of a teacher without a commission from me was a thief and a robber; and in the pre-

sent age he is no better who assumes that office without my commission, and particularly without believing on me. "But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." (John x. 2—4.)

The doctrine here inculcated is, that good men are obedient to the instructions of true and faithful teachers, and that the latter in every case show them their duty with the greatest plainness, not concealing it because it may be disagreeable to their inclinations. On the contrary, "a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." (John x. 5.) The people of God will not hearken to impostors and false teachers, but flee from them like sheep from the voice of a stranger; for they can easily distinguish them from the messengers of God by their fruits, their doctrines, and their lives.

Thus did the great Redeemer of mankind, by this instructive parabolical discourse, explain to the Pharisees the difference between true and false teachers; but they being ignorant of his meaning, he added, by way of explication, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." I am not only the door by which the shepherds must enter, but I am also the door of the sheep: it is by me that men enter into the spiritual enclosure of the church. "All that ever came before me"—all those who in former times assumed the character of teachers of religion without commission from me—"are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them." (John x. 8.)

I am the door through which alone any one can come acceptable unto

The Good Shepherd.

God. "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." If any man believeth on me he shall become a true member of the church of God upon earth, and shall from time to time receive such instructions as shall nourish his soul unto eternal life. Our blessed Saviour seems to change the image in the last particular, and, instead of the outer court of the temple, where the sheep were kept,

represented an enclosure where cattle were fed.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John x. 10.) You may easily know that I am neither a thief nor a robber by considering that the intention of such is only to steal, to kill, and to destroy the flock. They assume the characters of teachers who have received their commissions from heaven for no other reason than to promote their own interest at the expense of the souls of men; but I am come merely to give you life, and even much more abundantly than it was given by Moses in the dispensation of the law.

Nor am I an hireling shepherd, appointed by the owner to take care of the flock: I am the good Shepherd promised by the prophets, the true proprietor of the sheep. This is sufficiently evident from my laying down my life for the safety of the flock; whereas an hireling, who proposes nothing but his own advantage, when he sees the wolf approaching, deserts the sheep; his whole care is for his own safety, and therefore he will not expose himself to any danger on their account, so that the wolf without resistance tears some to pieces, and disperses the rest. "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." (John x. 11—13.)

And as I am the good Shepherd, and so earnest in tending them, so I know every particular sheep; I know the circumstances wherein they are placed, am well acquainted with their wants, and can judge what assistance they stand in need of. Besides, I love them all with the greatest sincerity, and approve of their obedience to me, because, though it be imperfect, it is sincere. For they have just notions of my dignity and character; they know that I am their Shepherd and Saviour sent from God, and that I am able to feed them with knowledge, deliver them from the punishment of sin, and bestow on them eternal life, and procure them a place in the blissful mansions of my Father's kingdom. "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." (John x. 14.)

And this mutual knowledge and love of each other is like that subsisting between me and my Father. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John x. 15.)

I will give a convincing proof of the love I bear the sheep: I will lay down my life for them—an instance of regard that will never be given by any hireling.

But I have other sheep besides those of the seed of Abraham; num-

bers of my flock are among the Gentiles. These also I must bring into my church, and cheerfully submit to my laws. There shall then be but one visible church, the members of which, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, shall know me, shall distinguish my voice from that of a stranger, and I, the true Shepherd, will feed and govern them, for the middle wall of partition shall be broken down. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." (John x. 16.)

And because I lay down my life to save the world, therefore my heavenly Father loveth me. But though I lay down my life, I will take it again; for I will in due time rise from the dead. I do not, however, either lay down my life or rise from the dead without the appointment of the Almighty. I act in both according to the Divine wisdom, and agreeably to the will of my heavenly Father. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John x. 17, 18.)

Various were the effects produced by this discourse upon the minds of the Jews. Some of them cried out that he was mad, or possessed with a devil, and that it was the highest folly to hear him; while others, who judged more impartially of him and his doctrine, declared that his discourses were not those of a lunatic, nor his miracles the works of a devil; asking those who were enemies to Jesus if they imagined any devil was able to confer the faculty of sight on one that was born blind. "There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" (John x. 19—21.)

Soon after, as Jesus was standing in Solomon's porch, the Jews came to him, desiring that he would tell them plainly whether he was the expected Messiah or not. But Jesus, knowing that they did not ask this question for information, but to gain an opportunity of accusing him to the Romans as a seditious person who endeavoured to deceive the people, by pretending to be the great Son of David promised by the prophets, in order to usurp the kingdom, told them that they must form a judgment of him from his actions. "I told you, and ye believed not: the works I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." (John x. 25, 26.) Your unbelief is the effect of your attachment to this world, being unwilling to receive the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, because you must then renounce all your fond

hopes of temporal power and advantages. But, on the contrary, those who are of a meek and humble disposition, with minds free from worldly passions, easily perceive the truth of my doctrine and miracles, and consequently are readily disposed to become my disciples. Nor shall such persons lose their reward; for I will willingly receive them, and make them partakers of eternal life in my Father's kingdom. And however assiduous malicious men may be in endeavouring to hinder men from believing on me, they shall never be able to effect their purpose, though assisted by all the powers of darkness. For my heavenly Father, who hath given them to me, is far greater than them all; nor is any able to contend with him: and this powerful, this Almighty Being and I are one. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." (John x. 27, &c.)

The Jews were so incensed at this declaration, which they considered as blasphemous, that they took up stones to cast at him, in conformity to the law, which commands all blasphemers to be stoned. But Jesus asked them which of the beneficent miracles he had wrought in confirmation of his mission deserved such treatment. "Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" As if he had said, I have fed the hungry in the desert, I have healed the lame, I have cleansed the lepers, I have cured the sick, I have given sight to the blind, I have cast out devils, and I have raised the dead: for which of these works are ye going to stone me? Do these miracles indicate that the author of them is an impostor? Or can you be so stupid as to think that the Almighty would suffer any person to perform such works with no other intention than to deceive the human race? The Jews answered, We are far from thinking that thou deservest punishment for any good work thou hast done in favour of the afflicted and distressed: the punishment is intended to chastise thee for thy blasphemous speeches; for thou, though a weak mortal, a being of a day, like ourselves, arrogantly assumest the power and majesty of the Most High, and, by claiming the incommunicable attributes of the Deity, makest thyself God. "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." (John x. 33.)

Jesus replied, Have not the Scriptures expressly called those gods and the sons of God who were commissioned to govern God's people, on account of their high office and the inspiration of the Spirit, which was, though sparingly, bestowed upon them? Can you, therefore, impute to

that person whom the Almighty hath sanctified and sent into the world to save lost mankind, and pay the price of redemption for all the sons of men; can you, I say, impute blasphemy unto him for taking on himself the title of the Son of God? If my own assertion be not sufficient to convince you of my personal dignity, you must surely think that the many miracles I have wrought abundantly prove that they are the works of the Most High, as Omnipotence alone could perform them, and therefore that the Father and I are so united that whatever I say or do is approved of by the Almighty. "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." (John x. 34, &c.)

But this reply, instead of satisfying the Jews, rather tended to enrage them the more; and Jesus, seeing it was of no avail to reason with so headstrong a people, rendered himself invisible, and by that means escaped from them. "Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand." (John x. 39.)

The feast of the dedication being now over, Jesus departed from Jerusalem, and retired into the parts of Perea beyond Jordan. Here his ministry was attended with great success; for the inhabitants of the country, remembering what had been told them by John the Baptist concerning Jesus, and being sensible that the doctrine and miracles of our blessed Saviour were fully equal to what the Baptist had foretold, firmly believed him to be the Messiah.

According to this supposition, which seems the most agreeable to reason, the inhabitants of these countries enjoyed the doctrine and miracles of the Son of God for a very considerable time. But however this be, the evangelist tells us that while he was executing his ministry beyond Jordan, he happened to pray publicly with such fervency that one of his disciples, who was exceedingly affected both with the matter and manner of his address, begged he would teach them to pray. "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." (Luke xi. 1.)

Soon after our blessed Saviour happened to cast out a devil, when some who were present ascribed the miracle to Beelzebub. "And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through

Beelzebub the chief of the devils." (Luke xi. 14, 15.) However strange this argument may seem, and however weak and absurd it must appear to impartial judges, yet it had a considerable effect on illiterate persons, especially on those whose prejudices and interests it favoured. The Pharisees pretended that, as Jesus had all along been at great pains to oppose the traditions which most of the teachers of that age considered as the essentials of religion and the principal branches of piety, they concluded that he must be a very wicked person. They also supposed that a false prophet had the power of working signs and wonders, and thence concluded that our Saviour performed all his miracles by the assistance of evil spirits, with an intention to turn the people from the worship of the true God.

Another pretended reason for ascribing his miracles to evil spirits was that the demons themselves, when they departed out of the persons possessed, honoured him with the title of the Messiah. These arguments, though so evidently founded on falsehood, contributed largely to the infidelity of the Jews, and however we may be surprised that such weak reasons should have any effect, considering what multitudes were witnesses of the many miracles the blessed Jesus performed on the sick of all sorts—on the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the lame, on paralytics, lunatics, demoniacs, and other miserable objects; nay, on the dead, whom he raised again to life; on the winds and the seas; in a word, on every part of nature; yet these, and their own superstitious opinions, fixed the headstrong people in their infidelity.

Though part of the multitude were content with ascribing this miracle to the power of evil spirits, others went still further, desiring him to prove himself the Messiah by giving them a sign from heaven. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, refused to grant them this request, telling them that they were a wicked race of mortals, and discovered a very perverse disposition, by seeking, after so many miracles had been performed, a sign from heaven; and therefore that no greater sign should be given them than the sign of the prophet Jonas. "This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet." (Luke xi. 29.)

"No man," added the Saviour of the world, "when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light." No man endued with the Spirit of God concealeth the blessed gift, but holdeth forth the glorious doctrines of salvation, as it were, like a candle, that the light of the same may shine upon the souls of men who hear them. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is

full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." (Luke xi. 34, &c.) Take care, therefore, that thy soul is so completely enlightened by the Spirit that the emanations of its light be not in the least interrupted by any evil passion or affection; that all the faculties of the soul may be as much enlightened and assisted as the members of the body are by the bright shining of a candle. "If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." (Luke xi. 36.)

Thus did our blessed Saviour prove the truth of his mission, against the cavils and sophistical reasonings of his malicious enemies. And when he had done speaking, one of the Pharisees present desired he would dine with him. The Redeemer of mankind accepted the invitation, though probably given with an insidious design, accompanied the Pharisee to his house, and sat down to meat, but without performing the ceremony of washing, observed by all the other guests.

An omission of this kind could not fail of surprising the Pharisee, as he had thereby shown an open contempt of their traditions. Jesus, who well knew the thoughts of this bigoted Pharisee, said to him, Your sect are remarkably careful to keep everything clean that touches your food, lest by eating it your body should be polluted, but take no pains to clean your minds from the pollutions of rapine, covetousness, and wickedness. You must surely be convinced that he who created the body formed also the soul; and can you imagine that the Almighty, who requires purity of body, because it is the work of his hands, will not also insist upon a greater purity of soul, which is undoubtedly the far nobler part of human nature? Instead, therefore, of that scrupulous solicitude of washing your hands when you sit down to meat, ye should be careful to apply yourselves to the great duty of charity—a duty that will render it impossible for any external things to defile you, but will be at all times acceptable to your Maker. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you." (Luke xi. 39, &c.)

But the Pharisees, obstinate and perverse, withstood every means made use of by the benign Redeemer of mankind to conquer their prejudices and bring them to the knowledge of the truth, and therefore our blessed Saviour treated them on this occasion with a kind and wholesome severity, denouncing against them the most dreadful woes for regarding so zealously the ceremonial parts of religion, and at the same time utterly

neglecting the most important precepts. "Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." (Luke xi. 42, &c.)

A certain lawyer who sat at the table, thinking that his rebuke, though levelled principally against the scribes and Pharisees, affected his order also, was greatly displeased. But our blessed Saviour, who had never any regard to the persons of men, despised his resentment, and told him freely what he thought of their character. "Woe unto you also, ye Lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers." (Luke xi. 46.) You pervert, in a very erroneous manner, the interpretation of Scripture, for no other reason than to favour the tradition of the elders, and by that means lay so heavy a burden on the shoulders of the descendants of Jacob that neither you nor they will touch with one of their fingers.

The blessed Jesus also condemned them for building the sepulchres of the prophets whom their fathers had murdered, because they did not do it from the respect which they had for the memory of these holy men, but from a secret approbation of their fathers' actions, as too evidently appeared from their whole conduct. "Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation." (Luke xi. 47, &c.)

Our Lord also reproved the lawyers for filling the minds of the people with notions founded on the wrong interpretation of Scripture, whereby they were prejudiced against the gospel: not being contented with rejecting it themselves, they took care to hinder others from receiving it. "Woe unto you, Lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." (Luke xi. 52.)

Such honest reprimands highly provoked the Pharisee and his guests. They were conscious of being guilty of the crimes laid to their charge, but unwilling that the people should

think them guilty, and therefore, out of revenge, urged him to speak on a variety of topics, hoping they should be able by that means to find occasion of rendering him obnoxious either to the government or the multitude. "And as he said these things unto them, the Scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him." (Luke xi. 53, 54.)

CHAPTER XXI.

Explanation of the origin and opinion of the different sects amongst the Jews. Our Lord teaches the multitude by plain discourse, and also by parable.

HAVING undertaken to write the life of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we cannot omit a distinct account of the different sects of the Jews, a people with whom he was most intimately concerned, both as an elucidation of many circumstances as well as a verification of many things foretold concerning the Messiah.

Josephus reckons four principal sects among the Jews: the Pharisees, the Sadducees (called also the Herodians), the Essenes, and the Galileans. The evangelists mention only two, the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The rise of the Pharisees is unknown. They claim, indeed, the celebrated Hillel for their founder, who is by some supposed to have lived during the pontificate of Jonathan, about an hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ; but others, with more reason, suppose that he was contemporary with the famous Someas, who lived about the time of Herod, long before whom the sect of the Pharisees was in high repute. It is therefore probable that they claim Hillel rather as an ornament than as the author of their sect.

One of the most famous tenets of the Pharisees was that of an oral tradition handed down from Moses, and to which they attributed the same divine authority as to the sacred books. This being strenuously opposed by the Sadducees and Samaritans, rendered these equally detested by them. But none more incurred their hatred than the blessed Jesus, who embraced every occasion of reproving them for the unjustifiable preference they gave this pretended tradition to the written word of God, and for condemning those as apostates worthy of death who did not pay the same, or even a greater regard to the former than to the latter.

Among other tenets embraced by them, in opposition to the Sadducees, were those of the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and future rewards. But, with regard to the last, they excluded all who were notoriously wicked from having any share in the pleasures of eternity, supposing that, as soon as death had put a period to their existence, their souls were conveyed into everlasting punishments.

They also affirmed that all things were subject to fate, or, as some expressed it, to the heavens, except the fear of God. It is not easy to conceive what they meant by this. Josephus, indeed, will have it that they designed to reconcile the fatality or predestination of the Essenes with the free-will of the Sadducees.

If so, this is not the only absurdity, or even contradiction, which they held; but a certain learned prelate seems to have proved that they attributed all to fate, or to that chain of causes to which the Creator had subjected all things from the beginning, among which the influence of the heavenly bodies was considered as the principal. This seems to be hinted at by St. James in the beginning of his epistle to new converts, where he explodes that pharisaical leaven by the most beautiful opposition of the immutability of God, the giver of all good, to the mutability of the planets, which, according to that notion, must necessarily vary their aspect from a malign to a benevolent one, and the contrary, even by their natural motion and change of position. This tenet of the Pharisees was, therefore, a new source of dislike to the doctrines delivered by the blessed Jesus, as these affirm that men are the authors of their own unbelief, disobedience, and obstinacy, and consequently answerable for that and all the train of evil these vices draw after them.

But the most distinguished character of the Pharisees, and that which rendered them most obnoxious to the just censures of our blessed Saviour, was their supererogatory attachment to the ceremonial law; their frequent washings, fastings, and prayings; their giving alms publicly, seeking for proselytes, scrupulous tithings, affected gravity of dress, gesture, and mortified looks; their building the tombs of the prophets, to tell the world that they were more righteous than their ancestors who murdered them, though they were themselves plotting the death of one greater than all the prophets; their over-scrupulous observance of the Sabbath, to the exclusion of works of the greatest charity, and many other of the like nature; while they were wholly negligent of the moral and eternal law of mercy and justice, of charity, humility, and the like indispensable virtues. The very best of them contented themselves with abstaining from the actual committing any sinful act, while they indulged themselves in the most wicked thoughts and desires. Nay, some, more hard-

ened in their vices, made no scruple not only of coveting, but devouring poor widows' houses; of committing the vilest oppressions, injustices, and cruelties; and of encouraging these enormities in their disciples under the specious cloak of religion and sanctity. Well, therefore, might the great Redeemer of mankind compare them to whited sepulchres, beautiful, indeed, without, but within full of rottenness and corruption.

The last erroneous opinion I shall mention of the Pharisees, common, indeed, to all the other sects, but more exactly conformable to their haughty, rapacious, and cruel temper, was the expectation of a glorious, a conquering Messiah, who was to bring the whole world under the Jewish yoke; so that there was scarce an inhabitant of Jerusalem, however mean, that did not expect to be made a governor of some opulent province under that wonderful Prince. How unlikely was it, then, that the preaching of the meek, the humble Jesus, whose doctrine breathed nothing but humility, peace, sincerity, contempt of the world, and universal love and beneficence, should ever be relished by that proud, that covetous, that hypocritical sect, or even by the rest of the populace, while these, their teachers, so strenuously opposed it!

The sect of the Sadducees is said to have been founded by one Saddoc, a disciple of Antigonus of Socho. Their chief tenet was, that our serving God ought to be free either from slavish fear of punishment or from selfish hope of reward; that it should be disinterested, and flow only from the pure love and fear of the Supreme Being. They added that God was the only immaterial being, in consequence of which they denied the existence of all spirits except the Almighty himself. It is, therefore, no wonder that the Sadducees should take every opportunity of opposing and ridiculing the doctrine of the resurrection.

Another of their tenets, equally opposite to the Pharisees and the doctrine of Christ, was, that a man was constituted absolute master of all his actions, and stood in no need of any assistance to choose or act: for this reason they were always very severe in their sentences when they sat as judges. They rejected all the pretended oral traditions of the Pharisees, admitting only the texts of the sacred books, and preferred those of Moses to all the rest of the inspired writings.

They are charged with some other erroneous tenets by Josephus and the Talmudists; but those already mentioned are abundantly sufficient for the purpose. The notion of a future life, universal judgments, eternal rewards and punishments, to men whom a contrary doctrine had long soothed into luxury and an overgrown fondness for temporal happiness, which they considered as the only reward for their obedience, must of necessity appear strange and frightful, and, as such, could not fail of meeting with the strongest opposition from them,

especially if we add what Josephus observes, that they were in general men of the greatest quality and opulence, and consequently too apt to prefer the pleasures and grandeur of this life to those of another.

The sect of the Galileans, or Gaulonites, so called from Judas the Galilean, or Gaulonite, appeared soon after the banishment of Archelaus, when his territories were made a Roman province, and the government given to Coponius. For Judas, taking advantage of the discontent of the Jews, who considered this as an open attempt to reduce them to slavery, prepared to ripen them for an insurrection. Augustus furnished them with a plausible pretence by issuing, about this time, an edict for surveying the whole province of Syria, and laying on it a proportional tax. Judas, therefore, who was a man of uncommon ambition, took occasion from this incident to display all his eloquence in order to convince the Jews that such a submission was nothing less than base idolatry, and placing men on a level with the God of Jacob, who was the only Lord and Sovereign that could challenge their obedience and subjection. The party which he drew after him became in a short time so considerable, that they threw everything into confusion, laid the foundation for those frightful consequences that ensued, and which did not end but with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Essenes, though not mentioned by the evangelists, made a very considerable sect among the Jews, and are highly celebrated by Josephus, Philo, Pliny, and several Christian writers, both ancient and modern. It is impossible to trace their origin, or even the etymology of their name. This, however, is certain—that they were settled in Judea in the time of Jonathan, the brother and successor of Judas Maccabeus, about an hundred and fifty years before Christ.

The Essenes distinguished themselves, by their rules and manner of life, into laborious and contemplative. The former divided their time between prayer and labour, such as the exercise of some handicraft, or the cultivation of some particular spot of ground, where they planted and sowed such roots, corn, &c., as served for their food; and the latter between prayer, contemplation, and study. In this last they confined themselves to the sacred books and morality, without troubling themselves with any other branch of philosophy.

Both the contemplative and laborious had their synagogues, their stated hours for prayer, for reading and expounding the sacred books. The latter was always performed by their elders, who were seated at the upper end of the synagogue, according to their seniority; while the younger, who were permitted to read the lessons, were placed at the lower. Their expositions were generally of the allegorical kind, in which they seem to have excelled all their Jewish brethren. But they paid the greatest regard to the five books of Moses,

and considered that lawgiver as the head of all the inspired penmen: they even condemned to immediate death whoever spoke disrespectfully either of him or his writings. Upon this account they studied, read, and expounded them more than all the rest, and seem to have drawn their religion chiefly from the Pentateuch. The doctrines and expositions of the elders were received with implicit faith, and in their practice they conformed with an entire submission to all their dogmas.

With respect to their faith, they believed the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, like the Pharisees, but seem to have had no notion of the resurrection. They considered the souls of men as composed of a most subtle ether, which immediately after their separation from the body, or from the cage or prison, as they affected to call it, were adjudged to a place of endless happiness or misery; that the good took their flight over the ocean into some warm or delightful regions prepared for them, while the wicked were conveyed to some cold and intemperate climate, where they were left to groan under an inexpressible weight of misery. They were likewise entirely averse to the Sadducean doctrine of free-will, attributing all to an eternal fatality, or chain of causes, little different from that of Spinoza. They were averse to all kinds of oaths, affirming that a man's life ought to be such that he may be credited without them. The contemplative sort placed the excellency of their meditative life in raising their minds so far above the earth as to be able to see from thence what was done in heaven: when they had attained this degree of excellency they acquired the character of prophets.

In their practice they excelled all the other sects in austerity. If we may credit Philo, it was a fundamental maxim with them, upon their entrance into the contemplative life, to renounce the world, and to divide among their friends and relations their properties and estates. They never eat till after sunset, and the best of their food was coarse bread, a little salt, and a few stomachic herbs. Their clothing was made of coarse wool, plain and white. They condemned all sorts of unctions and perfumes as luxurious and effeminate. Their beds were hard, and their sleep short. Their heads, or superiors, were generally chosen according to seniority, unless there started up among the brotherhood some more conspicuous for their learning, piety, or prophetic spirit. Some of them, indeed, were so contemplative that they never stirred out of their cells, or even looked out of their windows, during the whole week, spending their time in reading sacred books, and writing comments upon them. On the Sabbath-day they repaired to their synagogues early in the morning, and continued there the whole day in prayers, singing of psalms, or expounding the sacred books.

Having endeavoured to explain the origin and tenets of several sects among the Jews, we now return to the history of our blessed Saviour, whom we left preaching in the country beyond Jordan, where he was surrounded by an innumerable multitude of people.

In the audience of this vast assembly he gave his disciples in general a charge to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, namely, hypocrisy, because all their actions would be brought to light either in this world or in that which is to come; and therefore exhorted them to be very careful never to do anything which could not bear the light, but to let the whole of their behaviour be honest, just, and good. "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." (Luke xii. 1—3.)

This argument against hypocrisy he used as a reason for their acquiring another quality, which would much better serve all the ends they could propose; namely, an undaunted resolution in the performance of their duty, founded on a firm confidence in God, who would bring to light the most secret word and thought, publicly condemn the wicked, and justify his faithful servants and children.

Fear not, said he, the malice of the human race; it can extend no further than the destruction of the body; your soul may bid defiance to their impotent rage; but dread the displeasure of that Almighty Being who, after he hath destroyed the body, is able to confine the soul in eternal torments. Remember all things are in his power, and that nothing happens without his permission: he provides for the meanest of his creatures, and surely you may think yourselves under his protection who numbers the very hairs of your head; nor can your enemies touch one of them without his permission. "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke xii. 4, &c.)

Our Lord, to animate his followers to perseverance, admonished them to look forward unto the general judgment, when he would acknowledge them as his servants, provided they acknowledged him in this world as their master, and cheerfully and constantly obeyed his commands; but if they were ashamed of him and his doctrine before the sons of men, he

would disown them before the celestial host; declaring that those who reviled the Spirit, by whom they performed their miracles, should be punished by the Almighty in proportion to the malignity of their crime, which is greater than that of reviling the Son of God himself, because it will be impossible for them to repent. "Also I say unto you,

Descent from the Cross. (*Daniele da Volterra.*)

Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven." (Luke xii. 8, &c.)

He also cautioned his disciples not

to be perplexed with regard to an answer when they should be brought before the rulers of the people, because they should be inspired by the Spirit of God. "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." (Luke xii. 11, 12.)

While our blessed Saviour was delivering these exhortations to his disciples, a certain person among the multitude begged him that he would interpose his authority with his brother, in order to oblige him to divide their paternal inheritance between them; but, as this decision properly belonged to the magistrates, our blessed Saviour, who came into the world to redeem the souls of mankind, and to purchase for them an eternal, not a temporal, inheritance, declined the office. He, however, embraced the opportunity of giving his hearers the most solemn caution against covetousness, declaring that neither the length nor happiness of human life had any dependence on the largeness of possessions. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke xii. 15.)

To excite their contempt for the things of this life, he placed before them in the strongest light an example of the bewitching influence of wealth in the parable of the rich glutton, who was cut off in the midst of his projects, and became a remarkable example of the folly of amassing the goods of this life, without having any regard to the commands of the Almighty. This wretched man, forgetting his own mortality, made preparations for a long and luxurious life, pleasing himself with the thought of possessing an inexhaustible fund of sensual enjoyments. But alas! while he was providing repositories for his riches the inexorable king of terrors seized him, and that very night hurried him before the awful tribunal of Omnipotence. "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii. 16, &c.)

How solemn the appeal! While he lay waking on his bed in anxious solicitude what he should do with his abundance, while his heart dilated with the hopes of a variety of pleasures and indulgences, in that very moment the golden dream vanishes

at once; all his thoughts perish, and in their stead a horrid account stares him in the face; a scene of judgment presents itself to his terrified imagination; a dark night of horror in an instant overwhelms that soul to which he had promised so much ease, so much pleasure; and instead of ease, instead of eating, drinking, and making merry, eternal tortures, unspeakable thirst, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth must be the portion of this miserable soul to all eternity!

"So is he," added our blessed Saviour, "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Thus shall he be taken away from all his soul desireth; thus shall he be torn from all his temporal prospects and pleasures. None of his beloved enjoyments shall follow him: naked as he came shall he depart out of the world, nor shall his riches be able to procure him the least comfort or respite in these scenes of terror. How should this reflection awaken us to a due care of our immortal part! How should it alarm us when planning fancied schemes of worldly pleasure, without the least regard to the great Disposer of all events! Without his assistance all our promises of security are vain and foolish; he will surely render all our labours abortive; and in a moment, when we think ourselves secure, the summons will arrive, swift as the forked lightning's flash, which shall convey us to the boundless regions of eternity, and present us, clothed in all our guilt, before the just, the mighty Author of our being!

This awakening parable exhibits a striking picture of the egregious folly of those who live only for themselves, laying up treasures for sensual enjoyments, but neglecting the grace of God, and the immense treasure of salvation laid up in Jesus Christ.

Having spoken this parable, our Lord proceeded to caution his disciples against anxious cares for the things of this world, from a consideration that the care of God's providence extends to every part of the creation. The fowls of heaven are fed by his bounty, and the lilies that adorn the valleys are supplied with rain from the clouds of heaven: if, therefore, said the blessed Jesus, Omnipotence so carefully provides for the inferior parts of the creation, the children of men have surely reason to rely on his bounty, and depend for subsistence on his merciful hand. He added, that as God had destined them to everlasting happiness in a future life, he would surely provide for them all the necessaries of the present. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." At the same time he gave his disciples another precept, peculiarly calculated for those times in which the profession of the gospel exposed men to the loss of their substance. "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth

corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke xii. 33, 34.)

Having thus recommended to them the disengagement of their affections from the things of this world, he exhorted them to labour after improvement in grace. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." (Luke xii. 35, 36.)

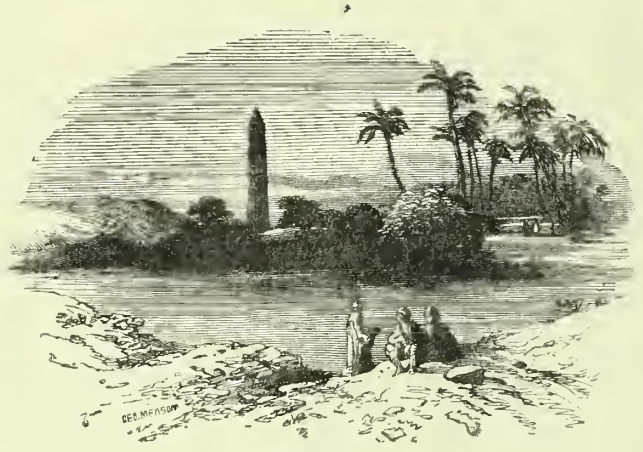
This was spoken in allusion to the customs of the East, where anciently great entertainments were made in

"He shall give his angels charge concerning thee." (*J. Gibson, R.A.*)

the evening; and on these occasions servants demonstrated their diligence by watching, and keeping their loins girded and their lamps burning, that they might be ready, on the first knock of their master, to open the door. Nor was it uncommon for the master, in order to reward such a servant, to order him refreshment, and sometimes even give it him with his own hand; in allusion to which our blessed Saviour added: "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down

to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke xii. 37.)

Our Saviour enforced this constant watchfulness and habitual preparation by reminding them of the uncertainty of his coming; telling his disciples that as every master of a family, if he knew the coming of the thief, would make some preparation against a surprise, so it would be highly requisite for them to make some preparation for the approach of their Master, and be always ready to receive him, as the time of his coming was uncertain.



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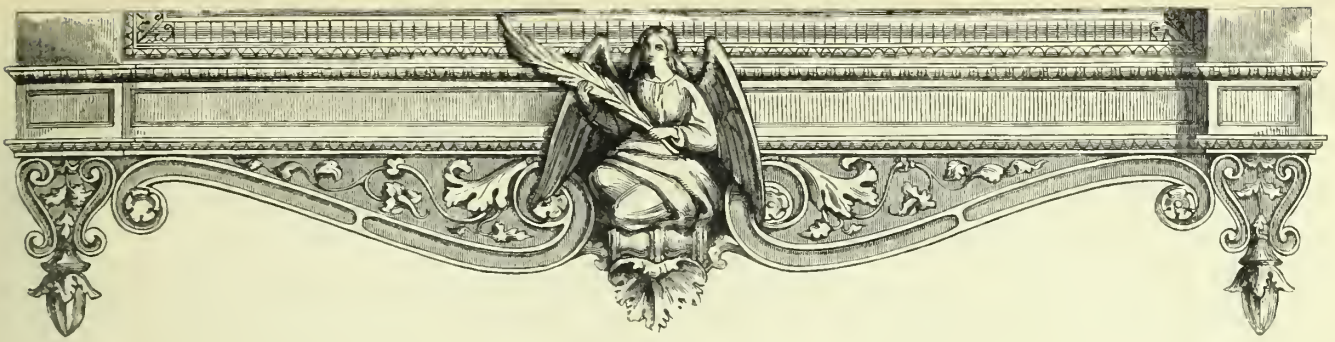

CHAPTER XXII.

Our Lord reproves the ignorance of the people in not understanding the signs which preceded his appearance. Pertinently replies to an ignorant question and inference concerning the Galileans. Teaches by parable. Relieves a distressed woman; and is warned to depart the country in order to escape the resentment of Herod.

THE great Preacher of Israel, having delivered these salutary admonitions to his disciples and followers, directed his discourse to the unbelieving crowd. You can, said he, by the signs that appear in the sky and on the earth, form a judgment of the weather; and why can ye not also discover the time of the Messiah's appearance by the signs which have preceded it? "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" (Luke xii. 54, &c.)

The prediction of the Son of man coming to punish the Jews for their rebellion and infidelity, delivered under the similitude of one who cometh secretly and unexpectedly to plunder a house, was a loud call to a national repentance. In order, therefore, to improve that prediction, he exhorted them to a speedy reformation, telling them that the least degree of reflection would be sufficient to point out to them the best methods they could possibly make use of for averting the impending judgments of the Almighty; illustrating what he had said by the punishment commonly inflicted on the man who refuses to make reparation for the injuries he has done his neighbour. "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence,

till thou hast paid the very last mite." (Luke xii. 58, 59.)

Some of his hearers thought proper to confirm this doctrine by giving what they considered as an example of it: "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices;" thinking that Providence, for some extraordinary crime, had suffered these Galileans to be murdered at the altar.

But our Lord showed them the error of their opinion and inference

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concerning this point, it being no indication that these Galileans were greater sinners than their countrymen because they had suffered so severe a calamity; and at the same time exhorted them to improve such instances of calamity, as incitements to their own repentance, assuring them that if they neglected so salutary a work they should all likewise perish. "And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 2, 3.)

He illustrated this doctrine by putting them in mind of the eighteen persons on whom the tower of Siloam fell, showing them, by this instance, the folly of interpreting the dispensations of Providence in that manner; for though this calamity seemed to flow immediately from the hand of God, yet in all probability it had involved people who were remarkable for their piety and goodness. "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 4, 5.)

To rouse them from their indolence, and to induce them to seek the aid of God's grace and Spirit, he added the parable of the fig-tree, which the master of the vineyard, after finding it three years barren, ordered to be destroyed, but which was spared one year longer at the earnest solicitations of the gardener. "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and

if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." (Luke xiii. 6, &c.)

By this parable our blessed Saviour represented the goodness of the Almighty towards the Jews in choosing them for his people, giving them the outward dispensations of religion, and informing them of the improvements he expected they should make of these advantages, and the punishments he would inflict upon them in case they slighted such benevolent offers. He also represented by it, in a very beautiful manner, the unbounded mercies of the Almighty in sparing them at the intercession of his Son, and giving them a further time of trial, and still greater advantages, by the preaching of the blessed Jesus and his apostles, concluding with an insinuation that if they neglected this last opportunity they should perish without remedy.

While Jesus continued in the country of Perea, he observed, while he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath-day, a woman who, during the space of eighteen years, had been unable to stand upright. A daughter of Israel labouring under so terrible a disorder could not fail of attracting the compassion of the Son of God.

He beheld this affecting object, he pitied her deplorable condition, he removed her complaint. She who came unto the synagogue bowed down with an infirmity was, by the all-powerful word of the Son of God, restored to her natural health, and returned to her house upright and full of vigour.

Such a display of Divine power and goodness, instead of exciting the gratitude of the master of the synagogue, so highly offended him that he openly testified his displeasure, and reproved the people as Sabbath-breakers, because they came on that day to be healed. "There are six days," said this surly ruler to the people, "in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day." (Luke xiii. 14.)

But our blessed Saviour soon silenced this hypocritical Pharisee by showing that he had not deviated from their own avowed practice. They made no scruple of loosing their cattle and leading them to water on the Sabbath-day, because the mercy of the action sufficiently justified them for performing it. And surely this action of loosing, by a single word, a woman, a rational creature, a daughter of Abraham, that had been bound by an incurable distemper during the tedious interval of eighteen years, was abundantly justified; nor could this bigoted ruler have thought otherwise, had not his reason been blinded by his superstition. "The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years,

be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." (Luke xiii. 15, &c.)

From this instance we may form some idea of the pernicious effects of superstition, which is capable of extinguishing reason, banishing compassion, and of eradicating the most essential principles and feelings of the human breast.

Our Lord, having reproved the superstition of the ruler of the synagogue, and observing the acclamations of the people, reflected with pleasure on the reason and truth which so effectually supported his kingdom. For he repeated the parables of the grain of mustard seed and of the leaven, to show the efficacious operations of the gospel upon the minds of the children of men, and its rapid progress through the world, notwithstanding all the opposition of its inveterate enemies.

The great Redeemer, having now planted the seeds of the gospel in the country of Perea, crossed the Jordan, and travelled by slow journeys towards Jerusalem, preaching in every village, and declaring the glad tidings of salvation to all the inhabitants of these countries.

While he was thus labouring for the salvation of mankind, one of the persons who accompanied him asked him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" In all probability the person who proposed this question had heard the Son of God describe the success of the gospel by the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven; and his notions of the kingdom of the Messiah being those that were then entertained by the Jews in general, he meant a temporal salvation. But Jesus, to convince him that he never intended to erect a secular kingdom, answered the question in a spiritual manner, and told him that a small number only of the Jews should be saved; exhorting them to embrace the offers of mercy before it was too late, for that many, after the period of their trial was concluded, and their state finally and irreversibly determined, should earnestly desire these benevolent offers, but should be denied their request. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are." (Luke xiii. 24, 25.)

He also repeated on this occasion what he had before delivered in his famous sermon on the mount, and what he had observed to the multitude in commendation of the centurion's faith. "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are;

depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." (Luke xiii. 26, &c.)

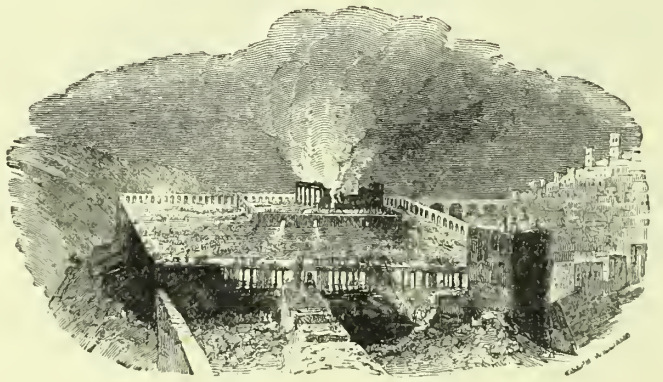
Immediately after Jesus had thus preached the kingdom of God to the multitude, certain of the Pharisees came to him, and told him that unless he departed thence Herod would de-

The Entombment (*Raffaelle.*)

stroy him; but this concern for his safety was altogether feigned, and their real design no other than to intimidate him, hoping by that means to induce him to leave the country, and retire into Judea, where they did not doubt but the chief priests would find some method of putting him to death. Perhaps Herod himself was privy to this message, and desirous that Jesus should leave his territories, though the agonies he had suffered on account of John the Baptist hindered him from making use of force. That this was really the case seems evident from the answer our blessed Saviour made to the Pharisees. "Go ye," said he to these

hypocritical Israelites, "and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." (Luke xiii. 32, 33.)

Having given this answer to the Pharisees, he reflected on the treatment the prophets had received from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, pathetically lamented their obstinacy, and the terrible desolation that would in a short time overtake them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Luke xiii. 34, 35.)



CHAPTER XXIII.

The blessed Jesus accepts the Pharisee's invitation a third time. Delivers divers parables representing the requisites for admittance into the kingdom of God. The care of the Redeemer for every one of his people. The reception of a penitent sinner, and the punishment of misusing the benefits of the gospel.

OUR Saviour, having finished this awful exclamation and prediction, was invited by one of the Pharisees to his house. Though he knew that this invitation arose not from a generous motive, yet, as he never shunned any opportunity of doing good, even to his most implacable enemies, he accepted it. At his entering the Pharisee's house they placed before him a man that had a dropsy, doubtless with an intention to accuse him for healing on the Sabbath-day, being persuaded that he would work a miracle in favour of so melancholy an object. Jesus, who knew the secret thoughts of their hearts, asked the lawyers and Pharisees whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day; but they refusing to give any answer to the question, Jesus laid his hand on the diseased person, and immediately his complexion returned, his body was reduced to its ordinary dimensions, and his former health and strength renewed in an instant. So surprising a miracle might surely have convinced the Pharisees that the author must have been endued with power from on high; but, instead of being persuaded that he was a person sent from God, and laboured only for the benefit of the children of men, they were contriving how they might turn this miracle to his disadvantage. Our Lord, however, soon disconcerted their projects by proving that, according to their own avowed practice, he had done nothing but what was truly lawful. "Which of you," said he, "shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?" If a misfortune happens to one of your beasts, you make no scruple of assisting it on the Sabbath, though the action may be attended with considerable

labour; and surely I may relieve a descendant of Abraham, when nothing more is requisite than touching him with my hand. This argument was conclusive, and so plain, that the grossest stupidity must feel its force, and the most virulent malice could not contradict it.

As the entertainment approached, our blessed Saviour had an opportunity of observing the pride of the Pharisees, and remarking what anxiety each of them expressed to obtain the most honourable place at the table. Nor did he let their ridiculous behaviour pass without a proper animadversion, in which he observed that pride generally exposes a person to many affronts, and that humility is the surest method of gaining respect. "When thou art bidden," said he, "of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke xiv. 8, &c.)

Having thus addressed the guests in general, he turned to the master of the house, and said to him, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." (Luke xiv. 12, 13.) Be very careful not to limit thy hospitality to the rich, but let the poor also partake of thy bounty. "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." (Luke xiv. 14.)

One of the Pharisees, ravished with the delightful prospect of the happiness good men enjoyed in the heavenly Canaan, cried out, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Blessed is he who, being admitted into the happy regions of paradise, shall enjoy the conversation of the inhabitants of those heavenly countries, as those spiritual repasts must regale and invigorate his mind beyond expression; in answer to which our blessed Saviour delivered the parable of the marriage supper, representing, by the invitation of the guests, the doctrine of the gospel, and the success those beneficent invitations to the great feast of heaven should meet with among the Jews; foretelling that though it was attended with every inviting circumstance, they would disdainfully reject it, and prefer the pleasures of a temporal existence to those of an eternal state, while the Gentiles with the greatest cheerfulness would embrace the be-

neficent offer, and thereby be prepared to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the happy mansions of the kingdom of heaven. But as this parable was afterwards spoken by our blessed Saviour in the temple, I shall refer the observations I propose to make on it till I come to the history where it was again delivered.

When Jesus departed from the Pharisee's house, great multitudes of people thronged to him to hear his doctrine, but mistook the true intention of it, expecting he was going to establish the Messiah's throne in Jerusalem, and render all the nations of the world tributary to his power. The benevolent Jesus therefore took the first opportunity to undeceive them, and to declare in the plainest terms that his kingdom was not of this world, and consequently that those who expected, by following him, to obtain temporal advantages, would find themselves wretchedly mistaken, as, on the contrary, his disciples must expect to be persecuted from city to city, and hated of all men for his name's sake, though it was requisite for those who would be his true followers to prefer his service to the riches, grandeur, and pleasures of the world, and to show by their conduct that they had much less respect and value for the dearest objects of their affections than for him. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 26, 27.) And in order to induce them to weigh this doctrine attentively in their minds, he elucidated it with two apposite cases—that of an unthinking builder, and that of a rash warrior. The former was obliged to leave his structure unfinished, because he had foolishly begun the building without computing the cost; whilst the latter was reduced to the dilemma of being ingloriously defeated, or meanly suing for peace previously to the battle, having rashly declared war before he had considered the strength of his own and his enemy's army. "So likewise, whosoever he be of you," added the blessed Jesus, "that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 33.)

The publicans and sinners, roused by the alarming doctrine of our Lord, listened to it attentively. This opportunity was readily embraced by the great Redeemer of mankind, who not only condescended to preach to them the happy tidings of eternal life, but even accompanied them to their own houses, that, if possible, the seeds of the gospel might take root in their hearts. But this condescension of the meek and humble Jesus was considered by the haughty Pharisees as an action too mean for the character of a prophet. They murmured and were highly displeased at a condescension which ought to have given them the greatest joy. But Jesus soon showed them their

mistake by repeating to them the parables of the lost sheep and piece of money, intimating thereby the great care all prophets and pastors ought to take of those committed to their care, and the obligations they lay under for searching diligently for every wandering sinner, whose conversion is a grateful offering to the Almighty. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke xv. 10.)

To illustrate this doctrine still further, and show to the greatest sinner the willingness of God to receive him into his grace and favour, if, convinced of his unworthy and lost condition in himself, he implores forgiveness through the merits of Jesus Christ, and the renewal of his heart by the efficacious influence of the Spirit, he delivered the expressive parable of the prodigal son.

A certain man had two sons, the younger of whom, not content to live in his father's house, safe under his protection, and happy under his eye, desired his father to give him the portion of goods which fell to his share. This indulgent father did not hesitate to grant his request; but the ungrateful son had no sooner obtained what he asked of his parent than he left the presence and neighbourhood of so kind a father, and retired into a far country, where he had an opportunity of indulging, without restraint, his wicked inclinations; and there he wasted his substance in riotous living. Having thus consumed the portion given him by his indulgent parent, he began to feel the miseries of want, and, to add to his misfortunes, a terrible famine arose in that land, so that he soon became acquainted with the sharp stings of hunger. In this distressed condition he joined himself to a citizen of that country, willing to try every expedient rather than return to his merciful father, and humbly confess his faults. His master, from a just contempt of his former prodigality, employed him in the meanest and most contemptible offices: he sent him into his field to feed swine. Behold here, ye sons of extravagance, a change indeed! Behold this thoughtless prodigal reduced at once from a life of voluptuousness and gaiety, a life of pleasure and excess, to a life of the most abject slavery, a life of penury and want! Nay, so great was his hunger, so prodigious his distress, that he would even have been contented, in this miserable state, to have satisfied the cravings of hunger with the husks eaten by the swine; but no man relieved him, no man showed the least compassion for him, so that the very swine were in a better condition than this miserable prodigal!

Thus miserably reduced, he was brought to himself: he had hitherto been in a state of utter forgetfulness, but now began to reflect on his happy condition while he continued with his father, before he had deviated from the paths of virtue, and to compare it with his present deplorable condition. "How many hired

servants of my father," said he to himself, "have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" I will therefore, undeserving as I am, have recourse to his mercy and favour. "I will arise and go to my father;" for such he still is, and I, though wretched and lost, am yet his son. I will therefore "say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son:" that happiness is too great for me to expect or desire; I have, by my behaviour, forfeited all the right I once had in so endearing, so valuable a title: "make me as one of thy hired servants." I desire nothing more

Return of the Prodigal. (*T. Schnorr.*)

than that thou wouldst mercifully receive me as one of thy hired servants.

Having thus taken a firm resolution of throwing himself at the feet of his father, and imploring forgiveness for his past offences, he did not delay putting it immediately into execution: he arose, and with the utmost expedition came to his father.

A scene of tenderness and affection, amazingly pathetic, now presents itself to our view. His kind, his affectionate father saw him while he was yet afar off; his bowels yearned towards him; he had compassion on his lost, his ruined child; paternal fondness would not suffer him to forbear; he ran to meet him, he fell on his neck, he kissed him. Encouraged

by this kind reception, the son fell down at his father's feet, and began to make confession of his faults, to plead his own unworthiness, to request his father's pardon. "Father," said he, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He was not suffered to proceed any further; the love of his parent prevented the rest. He commanded his servants to bring the best robe, and put it on him; to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and to kill the fatted calf, that they might eat and be merry; "for this my son," said he, "was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

During this transaction the elder brother was in the field, properly employed in his father's business; but returning from thence, and hearing the sound of mirth, music, and dancing, he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. The servant replied that his younger brother was returned, and that his father had killed the fatted calf, because he had received him safe and sound. This news greatly displeased the elder son; he was very angry, and refused to go in, upon which his father came out and entreated him; but he replied, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." (Luke xv. 29, &c.)

His father, with the most amiable condescending tenderness, replied: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." Though he hath devoured my living with harlots, yet he is both thy brother and my son; thou shouldst not, therefore, be angry because he has repented and is returned, after we thought him irrecoverably lost.

Thus beautifully did our Lord represent the work of grace on the heart of man, from the first conviction of sin to the absolute confession of it; showing at the same time that there can be no true confession without a thorough consciousness of guilt, a sense of our lost state, and an entire reliance on the mercy of God, through Christ our Lord

There are three expositions given of this instructive representation, each of which seems to have some place in the original design; for it should be observed and carefully remembered that the parables and doctrines of our Saviour are by no means to be confined absolutely to one single point of view, since they frequently have relation to different objects, and consequently prove the riches and depth of the manifold wisdom of Omnipotence. In this parable, for instance, the great and principal doctrine intended to be

particularly inculcated is, that sinners, upon their repentance, are gladly received into favour, or that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. There are, however, two other expositions of this parable. The first is that of the greatest part of the ancients, who expound it of Adam. He was made in the image of God, and endowed with many other excellent gifts, which he might have used happily, had he been content to stay in his Father's house; but, like this younger brother, who foolishly desired his portion of goods to himself, that he might be his own master, and under no confinement or restriction, he was unwilling to remain under obedience to the Divine precepts: he was desirous of having a free use of the things in Paradise, and by the devil's instigation affected a wretched independency, which caused him to break the Divine command and eat of the forbidden tree, to obtain the knowledge of good and evil. Thus he lost for himself and his posterity the substance put at first into his possession; but his heavenly Father, on his and his posterity's return, hath provided such grace and compassion for him that they may be reinstated in their former place and favour. And the same grace not being granted to the higher order of intellectual beings, the fallen spirits, is the cause of their murmuring against God and men, represented by the answer of the elder brother in this parable; for it is conjectured by many that the grace originally proposed for man, through Christ, in case of his fall, was the principal occasion of the rebellion of the apostate angels.

Others, secondly, with a much greater show of probability, expound this parable of the two people, the Jews and Gentiles, who have both one Father, even God; and while they both continued in their Father's house, the true church, they wanted for nothing: there was plenty of food for the soul, there was substance enough for them both. But the latter, represented by the younger brother, possessed of his share of knowledge, went into a strange country, left God, and spent his substance,—the evidence and knowledge of the Almighty,—fell into idolatry, and wasted all he had in riotous living—all his knowledge of God in the loose and absurd ceremonies of idolatry. Then, behold, a mighty famine arose in that land,—the worship of the true God was banished the country. In this dreadful dearth and hunger he joined himself to the devil, and worked all "uncleanness with greediness;" but finding nothing to satisfy his spiritual hunger, this prodigal, long estranged from his Father, reflecting on his spiritual famine and his own severe wants, humbly confessed his faults, returned to his offended Father, was readmitted into favour, and blessed with the privileges of the gospel. But the elder brother, the Jewish church, daily employed in the field of legal ceremonies, and who had long groaned under the yoke of the law, seeing the Gentiles received into

the covenant of the gospel, obtain the remission of sins and the hopes of everlasting life, murmured against the benevolent acts of the Almighty. God, however, out of his great compassion, pleaded pathetically the cause with the elder brother, offered him all things upon supposition of his continuing in his obedience, and declared that he had delivered the nations from the heavy yoke of the ceremonial law. Thus the parable has a very clear and elegant exposition; the murmuring of the elder brother is explained to us without the least difficulty; and, as the offence

Drought in the East. (*J. F. Portaels.*)

of receiving the Gentiles to pardon and peace through Jesus Christ was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews, it is natural to imagine that our Saviour intended to obviate and remove it by this excellent parable.

It is, however, evident, both from the context and the occasion of delivering it, that the third interpretation is the first in design and importance. The publicans and sinners drew near to hear Jesus.

This gave occasion to a murmuring among the Pharisees; and, upon their

murmuring, our Saviour delivered this and two other parables to show that if they would resemble God and the celestial host, they should, instead of murmuring, rejoice at seeing sinners willing to embrace the doctrine of the gospel, because there is joy in the presence of God and his angels over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that "need no repentance." The obstinacy and malicious temper of the Pharisees, who opposed every good doctrine, made a deep impression on the spirit of the blessed Jesus; he did not, therefore, content himself barely with justifying his receiving sinners, in order to their being justified and saved through him, but, in presence of the scribes and Pharisees, turned himself to his disciples, and delivered the parable of the artful steward as an instance of the improvements made by the children of this world in embracing every opportunity and advantage for improving their interests. "There was," said he, "a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." (Luke xvi. 1, 2.)

This reprimand of his lord, and the inward conviction of his own conscience that the accusation was just, induced him to reflect on his own ill management of his lord's affairs, and in what manner he should support himself when he should be discharged from his service. "What shall I do?" said he; "for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed." In this manner he deliberated with himself, and at last resolved on the following expedient in order to make himself friends who would succour him in his distress. "I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore." (Luke xvi. 4, &c.)

To illustrate this parable, we beg leave to observe that the riches and trade of the Jews originally consisted principally in the products of the earth: they were, if I may be allowed the expression, a nation of farmers and shepherds; so that all their wealth arose from the produce of their flocks and herds, and the fruits of the earth; their corn, their wine, and their oil.

Thus the steward, to secure the friendship of his lord's tenants, bound them to him under a lasting obligation; and the master, when he heard the proceedings of his steward, commended him, not because he had acted honestly, but because he had

acted wisely: he commended the art and address he had shown in procuring future subsistence; he commended the prudence and ingenuity he had used with regard to his own private interest, and to deliver him from future poverty and distress. "For the children of this world," added the blessed Jesus, "are in their generation wiser than the children of light." They are more prudent and careful, more anxious and circumspect to secure their possessions in this world, than the children of light are to secure in the next an eternal inheritance. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." (Luke xvi. 9.)

This advice of our Saviour is worthy our most serious attention, the best use we can make of our riches being to employ them in promoting the salvation of others. For if we use our abilities and interests in turning sinners from the evil of their ways; if we spend our wealth in this excellent service, we shall conciliate the good-will of the heavenly beings, who will greatly rejoice at the conversion of sinners, and with open arms receive us into the mansions of felicity.

But this is not the whole application our Saviour made of this parable. He added, that if we made use of our riches in the manner he recommended, we should be received into those everlasting habitations where all the friends of virtue and religion reside; because, by our fidelity in managing the small trust of temporal advantages committed to our care, we show ourselves worthy and capable of a much greater trust in heavenly employments. But if, on the contrary, we do not apply our riches to the glory of God and the good of mankind, we shall be for ever banished from the abodes of the blessed, because, in behaving unfaithfully in the small trust committed to us here, we render ourselves both unworthy and incapable of a share in this everlasting inheritance. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke xvi. 10, &c.)

And if, while ye are God's stewards and servants, ye desert your trust and become slaves to the desire of riches, you can expect no other than to be called to a strict account of your stewardship, covetousness being as absolutely inconsistent with a true concern for the cause of Christ as it is for a man to undertake at one and the same time to serve two masters of contrary dispositions and opposite interests. "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke xvi. 13.)

Such is the parable, and such is our Lord's application of it, from which the main intention and design of it is very evident. It was intended to incite us to a zealous concern for our future and eternal state by making a due use of the means of grace, and working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, yet remembering that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. And if we thus employ our spiritual talents, we shall joyfully stand at the right hand of the great Judge of all the earth, and receive from him a public testimony

"Sick and in Prison." (*William Gale.*)

of our faith and love. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And thus shall we have made ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and be received into everlasting habitations.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Jesus rebukes the insolent derision of the Pharisees. Describes by a parable the nature of future rewards and punishments, and enforces the doctrine of mutual forbearance.

THE doctrines lately delivered by our Lord being so repugnant to the avaricious principles of the Pharisees, they attended to the doctrine of our Saviour with regard to the true use of riches, and the impossibility of men serving God and mammon at the same time, derided him as a visionary theorist, who despised the pleasures of this world for no other reason but because he was not able to procure them. It is, therefore, no wonder that men who had showed such a complication of the very worst dispositions should receive a sharp rebuke from the meek and humble Jesus. Accordingly he told them that they made, indeed, specious pretences to extraordinary sanctity by outwardly shunning the company of sinners, while in private they made no scruple of having society with them, or even of joining with them in their wickedness. "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts." Ye may, indeed, cover the foulness of your crimes with the painted cloak of hypocrisy, and in this disguise deceive those who look no further than the outside; but ye cannot screen your wickedness from the penetrating eye of Omnipotence, to whom all things are naked and exposed, and who judges of things not by their appearances, but according to truth. It is, therefore, no wonder that he often abhors both persons and things that are held by men in the highest estimation: "for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

This affected sanctity, while the mind is unrenewed, is an abomination to the God of purity and truth. I reject hypocrisy, and frequent the company of publicans and sinners to bring about their conversion; the Mosaic dispensation, which made a difference between men, ceasing when

John the Baptist first preached the doctrine of repentance; and the gospel dispensation, which admits all repenting sinners without distinction, then commenced. "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." (Luke xvi. 16.)

Think not I mean to destroy, but to fulfil the law, which is of essential and eternal obligation; for, till the law is abrogated, the least of its precepts cannot be neglected. "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

After treating of these particulars, he proceeded to consider the love of pleasure, so highly valued by the Pharisees, whose lust discovered itself by their frequent divorces—a practice which our blessed Saviour justly condemned. "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." (Luke xvi. 18.)

These reasons were clear and unanswerable; but the Pharisees, stupefied and intoxicated with sensual pleasures, were deaf to every argument, how powerful soever, provided it was levelled against their lusts. In order to illustrate this truth, confirm his assertion, and rouse these hypocritical rulers from their lethargy, he spoke the awakening parable of the rich man and the beggar.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover," so great was his misery, so exquisite his distress, "the dogs came and licked his sores." Thus wretched in life, the Almighty at last released him: "the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Nor could the rich man's wealth rescue him from the same fate: "the rich man also died, and was buried." But behold now the great, the awful change! "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and" the late despised and afflicted "Lazarus in his bosom." In this agony of pain and distress he cried to Abraham, his earthly father, begging that he would take pity on him, and send Lazarus to give him even the least degree of relief, that of dipping the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, for his torment was intolerable. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which

would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." (Luke xvi. 24, &c.)

The miserable wretch, finding it impossible to procure any relief for himself, was desirous of preserving his thoughtless relations from the like distress. "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." This also was a petition that could not be granted. It is too late to hope for relief when the soul is cast into the bottomless pit. They may learn, said Abraham, the certainty of the immortality of the soul from the books of Moses and the prophets, if they will give themselves the trouble to peruse them attentively; to which the miserable object replied, that the books of Moses and the prophets had been ineffectual to him, and he feared would be so to his brethren; but if one actually arose from the dead, and appeared to them, they would certainly repent, and embrace those offers of salvation they had before slighted. "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham told him that in this he was greatly mistaken, for that if they refused to believe the evidences of a future state contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets, the testimony of a messenger from the dead would not be sufficient to convince them. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

The truth asserted by Abraham has been abundantly proved by undeniable facts, from whence it has appeared that those who will not be convinced by a standing revelation will not be convinced, though one rose from the dead. These very Jews to whom our Saviour spoke were remarkable instances of this truth. They were fully assured that another Lazarus was, by the power of Christ, raised from the dead after he had lain several days in the tomb—a fact which they were so far from being able to disprove that they attempted to kill Lazarus, as if by this wicked action they could have destroyed his evidence. Nay, they had a still more lively proof in the resurrection of Jesus himself, which they were so far from being able to deny, that they bribed the soldiers to spread that senseless tale that his disciples came by night and stole him away. So true were Abraham's words, that they who believed not Moses and the prophets, which testify of Christ and his eternal redemption, would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

There is not a more awakening and alarming example than this parable through the whole gospel: it is drawn in such lively colours, that many, in all ages of the church, have considered it, not as a parable, but as a real history; but however this be, the important truths delivered in it are equally clear and equally cer-

tain. They are designed to describe the difference between this state and the future, between the children of this world and the children of light; the former having had their portion of happiness here, but that of the latter being reserved to a glorious hereafter.

Having thus reprimanded the Pharisees, he took occasion to speak of affronts and offences, described their evil nature, and their dreadful punishment. "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." (Luke xvii. 1, 2.) That is, the children of God, the followers of the Lamb, must meet with disgrace, reviling, and persecution here; but woe unto those who revile and persecute them! They had better undergo the worst of temporary judgments than the awful one which shall ensue.

He spake also against a quarrelsome temper in his servants, especially in the ministers and teachers of religion; prescribed a seasonable and prudent reprehension of the fault, accompanied with forgiveness on the part of the person injured, as the best means of disarming the temptation that may arise from thence. "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke xvii. 3, 4.)

It should be observed here that this discourse on forgiveness, uttered at a time when the Pharisees had just affronted him by calling him a false teacher, sufficiently proves how truly he forgave them all the personal injuries they had committed against him, and should be a powerful recommendation of that amiable virtue, the forgiveness of injuries.

But, however beautiful these discourses of our Saviour appear when examined with attention, they seem to have staggered the faith of his disciples and followers. Perhaps they still imagined that he would shortly erect a temporal kingdom, and distribute among them the rewards they expected for their services. If so, they might well desire their Master "to increase their faith," as discourses like these had a very different tendency from what might naturally have been expected from one who was going to establish the throne of David, and extend his sceptre over all the kingdoms of the earth. But, however this be, our Saviour told them that if they had the smallest degree of true faith, it would be sufficient for overcoming all temptations, even those which seem as difficult to be conquered as the plucking up trees, and planting them in the ocean. "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." (Luke xvii. 6.)

CHAPTER XXV.

Our Lord is applied to in behalf of poor Lazarus. Cures ten persons of the leprosy in Samaria, and restores Lazarus to life.

SOON after our blessed Saviour had finished these discourses, one of his friends, named Lazarus, fell sick at Bethany, a village about two miles from the countries beyond Jordan, where Jesus was now preaching the gospel. The sisters of Lazarus, finding his sickness was of a dangerous kind, thought proper to send an account of it to Jesus, being firmly persuaded that he who had cured so many strangers would readily come and give health to one whom he loved in so tender a manner. "Lord," said they, "behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." They did not add, Come down and heal him; make haste and save him from the grave; it was sufficient for them to propose their necessities to their Lord, who was both able and willing to help them in their distress.

"When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death." This declaration of the benevolent Jesus, when carried to the sisters of Lazarus, must have strangely surprised them, and exercised both their and his disciples' faith, since it is probable that before the messenger arrived at Bethany Lazarus had expired. Soon after, Jesus positively assured his disciples that Lazarus was dead.

The evangelist, in the beginning of this account, tells us that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, and that after he had received the message he abode two days in the same place where he was. His design in this might be to insinuate that his lingering so long after the message came did not proceed from a want of concern for his friends, but happened according to the counsels of his own wisdom. For the length of time which Lazarus lay in the grave put his death beyond all possibility of doubt, removed every suspicion of fraud, and consequently

afforded Jesus a fit opportunity of displaying the love he bore to Lazarus, as well as his own Almighty power, in his undoubted resurrection from the dead. His sisters, indeed, were by this means kept awhile in painful anxiety on account of their brother's life, and at last pierced by the sorrows of seeing him die; yet they must surely think themselves abundantly recompensed by the evidence accruing to the gospel from this astonishing miracle, as well as by the inexpressible surprise of joy they felt when they again received their brother from the dead.

Two days being thus expired, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." (John xi. 7.) His disciples were astonished at this proposal, and the recollection of his late danger in that country alarmed them. "Master," said they, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" Wilt thou hazard thy life among those who desire nothing more than to find an opportunity of killing thee? "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." (John xi. 9, 10.)

By this he intended to inform his disciples that those who lived by faith, and acted under the infallible influence of the Divine Spirit, could not stumble, whereas those who followed the directions of unenlightened nature were liable to perpetual error. Jesus having thus removed their groundless apprehensions and strengthened their faith, that he might clearly explain to them the cause of his going into Judea again, told them, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." The disciples, understanding his discourse in a literal sense, replied, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." His distemper is abated, and he in all probability is recovering. It would be, therefore, highly unreasonable in us to take two days' journey only to awaken him out of his sleep. Thus they discovered their fears, and hinted to their Master that it would be far safer to continue where they were than to take a hazardous journey into Judea.

They were, however, mistaken; for the evangelist informs us that he "spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep." Jesus therefore, to remove any doubt, said plainly to them, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." I am glad for your sakes that I was not in Judea before he died; for had I been there, and restored him to his health, your faith in me as the Messiah must have wanted the great confirmation it shall now receive by your beholding me raise him again from the dead.

Having thus given his disciples a proof of his Divine knowledge, and of the designs of Providence in the

death of Lazarus, our blessed Saviour added, "Nevertheless let us go unto him." Thus Jesus, who could have raised Lazarus without opening his lips or rising from his seat, leaves his place of retirement beyond Jordan, and takes a long journey into Judea, where the Jews lately attempted to kill him, because his being present in person, and raising Lazarus again to life before so many witnesses at Bethany, where he died, and was so well known, would be the means of bringing the men of that place, as well as others who should hear of it even in future ages, to the knowledge of a resurrection to eternal life, an admirable proof and emblem of which he gave them in this great miracle.

Jesus having thus declared his resolution of returning into Judea, Thomas, conceiving nothing less than destruction from such a journey, yet unwilling to forsake his Master, said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Let us not forsake our Master in this dangerous journey, but accompany him into Judea, that if the Jews, whose inveteracy we are well acquainted with, should take away his life, we may also expire with him.

The journey to Judea being thus resolved on, Jesus departed with his disciples, and in his way to Bethany passed through Samaria and Galilee. "And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed." (Luke xvii. 12, &c.)

Among these miserable objects one of them was a native of the country, who, perceiving that his cure was completed, came back, praising God for the great mercy he had received. He had before kept at a distance from our Saviour, but, being now sensible that he was entirely clean, approached his benefactor, that all might have an opportunity of beholding the miracle, and fell on his face at his feet, thanking him in the most humble manner for his condescension in healing him of so terrible a disease. Jesus, in order to intimate that those who were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth ought at least to have shown as great a sense of piety and gratitude as this Samaritan, asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." (Luke xvii. 17, 18.)

Jesus and his disciples now continued their journey towards Bethany, where he was informed by some of the inhabitants of that village that Lazarus was not only dead, as he had foretold, but had now lain in the grave four days. The afflicted sisters were overwhelmed with sorrow, so that many of the Jews from Jerusalem came to comfort them concerning their brother.

It seems the news of our Lord's coming had reached Bethany before

he arrived at that village; for Martha, the sister of Lazarus, being informed of his approach, went out and met him; but Mary, who was of a more melancholy and contemplative disposition, sat still in the house. No sooner was she come into the presence of Jesus than, in an excess of grief, she poured forth her complaints. "Lord," said she, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." If thou hadst complied with the message we sent thee, I well know that thy interest from heaven had prevailed, my brother had been cured of his disease, and delivered from the chambers of the grave.

Martha, doubtless, entertained a high opinion of our Saviour's power; she believed that death did not dare to approach his presence, and consequently, if Jesus had arrived at Bethany before her brother's dissolution, he had not fallen a victim to the king of terrors; but imagined that it was not in his power to heal the sick at a distance, though, at the same time, she seemed to have some dark and imperfect hopes that our blessed Lord would still do something for her. "But I know," said she, "that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She thought that Jesus could obtain whatsoever he desired by prayer, and therefore did not found her hopes on his power, but on the power of God, through his intercession. She doubtless knew that the great Redeemer of mankind had raised the daughter of Jairus and the widow's son at Nain from the dead, but seems to have considered her brother's resurrection as much more difficult, probably because he had been longer dead.

But Jesus, who was willing to encourage this imperfect faith of Martha, answered, "Thy brother shall rise again." As these words were delivered in an indefinite sense with regard to time, Martha understood them only as an argument of consolation drawn from the general resurrection, and accordingly answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She was firmly persuaded of that important article of the Christian faith, the resurrection of the dead, at which important hour she believed her brother would rise from the chambers of the dust. And here she seems to have terminated all her hopes, not thinking that the Son of God would call her brother from the sleep of death. Jesus therefore, to instruct her in this great truth, replied, "I am the resurrection and the life." I am the author of the resurrection, the fountain and giver of that life they shall then receive, and therefore can with the same ease raise the dead now as at the last day. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" To which Martha answered, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." I believe that thou art the true Messiah

so long promised by the prophets, and therefore believe thou art capable of performing every instance of power thou art pleased to claim.

Martha now seemed to entertain some confused expectations of her brother's immediate resurrection; and, leaving Jesus in the field, ran and called her sister according to his order, being willing that both Mary and her companions should be witnesses of this stupendous miracle.

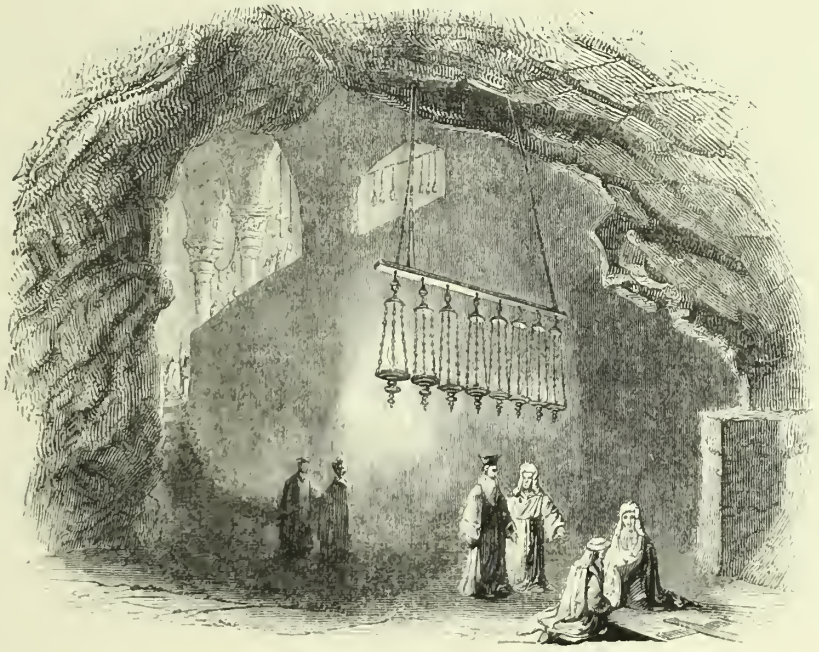
The Mother of Jesus.

Mary no sooner heard that Jesus was come than she immediately left her Jewish comforters, who only increased the weight of her grief, and flew to her Saviour; and the Jews, who suspected she was going to weep over the grave of her brother, followed her to that great Prophet who was going to remove all her sorrows. Thus the Jews who came from Jerusalem to comfort the two mournful sisters were brought to the grave of Lazarus, and made witnesses of his resurrection.

As soon as Mary approached the great Redeemer of mankind, she fell prostrate at his feet, and in a flood of tears poured out her complaint: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." No wonder the compassionate Jesus was moved at so affecting a scene. On his side stood Martha, pouring forth a flood of tears; at his feet lay the affectionate Mary, weeping and lamenting her dear departed brother; while the Jews who came to comfort the afflicted sisters, unable to confine their grief, joined the solemn mourning, and mixed their friendly tears in witness of

their love for the departed Lazarus, and in testimony to the justice of the sister's grief for the loss of so amiable, so deserving a brother. Jesus could not behold the affliction of the two sisters and their friends without having a share in it himself: his heart was melted at the mournful scene; "he groaned in spirit, and was troubled."

To remove the doubts and fears of these pious women, he asked them where they had buried Lazarus: not that he was ignorant where the body of the deceased was laid: he who knew that he was dead when so far distant from him, and could raise him up by a single word, must know where his remains were deposited; to which they answered, "Lord, come and see." The Son of God now, to prove that he was not only God, but a most compassionate man, and to show us that the tender affections of



An Eastern Sepulchre.

a human heart, when kept in due bounds—that friendly sorrow, when not immoderate, and directed to proper ends—is consistent with the highest sanctity of the soul, joined in the general mourning. He wept, even at the time that he was going to give the most ample proof of his Divinity.

By his weeping the Jews were convinced that he loved Lazarus exceedingly, but some of them interpreted this circumstance to his disadvantage; for, according to their mean way of judging, they fancied that he had suffered him to fall by the stroke of death for no other reason in the world but for want of power to rescue him; and thinking the miracle said to have been wrought on the blind men at the feast of tabernacles at least as difficult as the curing an acute distemper, they called the former in question because the latter

had been neglected. "Could not this man," said they, "which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Our Lord, regardless of their question, but grieved at the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their infidelity, groaned again within himself as he walked towards the sepulchre of the dead. At his coming to the grave he said, "Take ye away the stone;" to which Martha answered, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days;" or, as the passage may be better rendered, hath lain in the grave four days. She meant to insinuate that her brother's resurrection was not now to be expected. But Jesus gave her a solemn reproof, to teach her that there was nothing impossible with God, and that the power of the Almighty is not to be circumscribed within the narrow bounds of human reason: "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" *i.e.*, Have but faith, and I will display before thee the effect of Omnipotence.

The objections of Martha being thus obviated, she, with the rest, waited the great event in silence; and, in pursuance of the command of the Son of God, took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. Jesus had on many occasions publicly appealed to his own miracles as the proofs of his mission, though he did not generally make a formal address to his Father before he worked them; but being now to raise Lazarus from the dead, he prayed for his resurrection, to convince the spectators that it could not be effected without an immediate interposition of the Divine power. "Father," said he, "I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." (John xi. 41, &c.) I entertained no doubt of thy empowering me to do this miracle, and therefore did not pray for my own sake; I well knew that thou hearest me always. I prayed for the sake of the people, to convince them that thou lovest me, hast sent me, and art continually with me.

After returning thanks to his Father for this opportunity of displaying his glory, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!" This loud and efficacious call of the Son of God awakened the dead; the breathless clay was instantly reanimated; and he who had lain four days in the chambers of the tomb obeyed immediately the powerful sound. "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go." It would have been the least part of the miracle had Jesus by his powerful word unloosed the napkins wherewith Lazarus was bound; but he brought him out in the same manner in which he was lying, and ordered

the spectators to loose him, that they might be better convinced of the miracle, for in taking off the grave-clothes they had the fullest evidence both of his death and resurrection; for, on the one hand, the manner in which he was swathed must soon have killed him, had he been alive when buried, and consequently demonstrated, beyond all exception, that Lazarus had been dead several days before Jesus called him again to life. Besides, in stripping him, the linen offered, both to their eyes and smell, abundant proofs of his putrefaction, and by that means convinced them

The Raising of Lazarus. (*Haydon.*)

that he had not been in a deliquium, but was really dead; on the other hand, by his lively countenance appearing when the napkin was removed, his fresh colour, and his active vigour, they who came near and handled him must be convinced that he was in perfect health, and had an opportunity of proving the truth of the miracle by the closest examination. There is something extremely beautiful in our Lord's behaviour on this occasion: he did not utter one upbraiding word either to the doubting

sisters or the malicious Jews, nor did he let fall one word of triumph or exultation. "Loose him, and let him go," were the only words we have recorded. He was in this, as on all other occasions, consistent with himself, a pattern of perfect humility and absolute self-denial.

Such was the astonishing work wrought by the Son of God at Bethany; and in the resurrection of Lazarus, thus corrupted and thus raised by the powerful call of Jesus, we have a striking emblem and a glorious earnest of the resurrection of our bodies from the grave at the last day, when the same powerful mandate which spoke Lazarus again into being shall collect the scattered particles of our bodies, and raise them to immortality.

Such an extraordinary power displayed before the face of a multitude, and near to Jerusalem, even overcame the prejudices of some of the most obstinate among them. Many believed that Jesus could be no other than the great Messiah so long promised, though others, who still expected a temporal prince, and were therefore unwilling to acknowledge him for their Saviour, were filled with indignation, particularly the chief priests and elders. But this miracle, as well as all the rest he had wrought in confirmation of his mission, was too evident to be denied; and therefore they pretended that his whole intention was to establish a new sect in religion, which would endanger both their church and nation. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." (John xi. 47, &c.)

The common people, astonished at his miracles, will, if we do not take care to prevent it, certainly set him up for the Messiah; and the Romans, under pretence of a rebellion, will deprive us both of our liberty and religion. Accordingly, they came to a resolution to put him to death. This resolution was not, however, unanimous; for Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and other disciples of our Saviour, then members of the council, urged the injustice of what they proposed to do, from the consideration of his miracles and innocence. But Caiaphas, the high priest, from a principle of human policy, told them that the nature of government often required certain acts of injustice in order to procure the safety of the state. "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." (John xi. 49, 50.)

The council, having thus determined to put Jesus to death, deliberated for the future only upon the best methods of effecting it, and in all probability agreed to issue a proclamation promising a reward to any person who would deliver him into

their hands. For this reason our blessed Saviour did not now go up to Jerusalem, though he was within two miles of it, but returned to Ephraim, a city on the borders of the wilderness, where he abode with his disciples, being unwilling to go too far into the country, because the Passover at which he was to suffer was now at hand.

The Sycamore Tree.

CHAPTER XXVI.

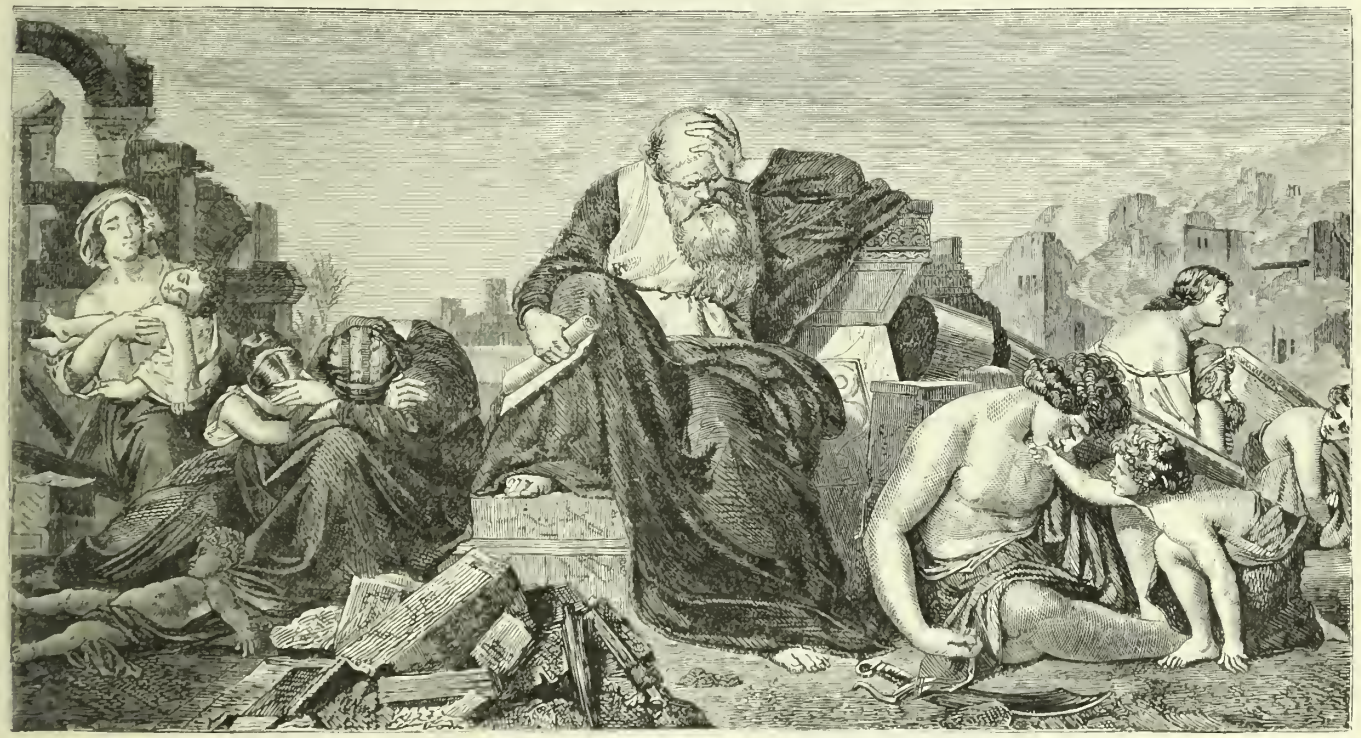
The Great Prophet of Israel foretells the ruin of the Jewish state. Enforces many important doctrines by parable. Blesses the children as emblems of the heavenly and Christian temper and disposition.

WHILE the blessed Jesus remained in retirement on the borders of the wilderness, he was desired by some of the Pharisees to inform them when the Messiah's kingdom would commence. Nor is their anxiety on that account matter of surprise; for, as they entertained very exalted notions of his coming in pomp and magnificence, it was natural for them to be very desirous of having his empire speedily erected. But our Saviour, to correct this mistaken notion, told them that the Messiah's kingdom did not consist in any external pomp of government, erected in some particular country by the terror of arms and the desolation of war, but in the subjection of the minds of men, and in rendering them conformable to the laws of the Almighty, which was to be effected by a new dispensation of religion, and this dispensation was already begun. It was therefore needless for them to seek in this or that place for the kingdom of God, as it had been already preached among them by Christ and his apostles, and confirmed by innumerable miracles. "The kingdom of God," said he, "cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke xvii. 20, 21.)

Having thus addressed the Pharisees, he turned himself to his disciples, and, in the hearing of all the people, prophesied the destruction of the Jewish state, whose constitution, both religious and civil, was the chief difficulty that opposed the erection of his kingdom. But because love and compassion were eminent parts of our Saviour's temper, he mentioned that dreadful catastrophe in such a manner as might tend to the reformation and profit of his hearers. He informed them that the prelude to this final destruction would be a state

of universal distress, when they should passionately wish for the personal presence of the Messiah to comfort them, but would be denied their request. "The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." He next cautioned them against those who shall recommend different ways of escaping the awful catastrophe, but are utterly unable: "And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." (Luke xvii. 23, &c.)

The coming of the Son of man



Jeremiah weeping over Jerusalem. (E. Bendemann.)

shall be sudden and unexpected. He will come in his own strength, and with great power; he will throw down all oppositions, destroy his enemies with swift destruction, and establish his religion and government in a great part of the world, as suddenly as lightning darts from one part of the heavens to the other. But before these things come to pass, he must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

Notwithstanding this sudden destruction and calamity that was to overwhelm the Jews, he told them their stupidity would be equal to that of the old world at the time of the deluge, or that of Sodom before the city was destroyed: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be

also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is

The Building of the Ark. (*G. Jager.*)

in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife." (Luke xvii. 26, &c.)

A more proper example than that of Lot's wife could not have been produced; for if any of his hearers, through an immoderate love of the world, should be prevailed on, in order to save their goods, after they were admonished from heaven of their danger by the signs which prognosticated the destruction of Jerusalem; or if any of them, through want of faith, should think that the calamities predicted to fall on the nation would not be either so great or sudden as he had declared, and did not use the precaution of a

speedy flight, they might behold in Lot's wife an example both of their sin and of their punishment. He added that those who were anxiously desirous of preserving life, from an attachment to its pleasures and vanities, should lose them, whereas those who are willing to lay down their lives in his cause should preserve them eternally. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." (Luke xvii. 33.)

Having foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, our blessed Saviour spake the following parable in order to excite them to a constant perseverance in prayer, and not to be so weary and faint in their minds as to neglect or wholly omit this necessary duty.

There was in a city, said the Saviour of the world, a judge who, being governed by atheistical principles, had no regard to the precepts of religion, and being very powerful, did not regard what was said of him by man, so that all his decisions were influenced merely by passion or interest. In the same city was also a widow who, having no friends to assist her, was absolutely unable to defend herself from injuries, or procure redress for any she had received. In this deplorable situation she had recourse to the unjust judge in order to obtain satisfaction for some oppressive wrong she had lately received; but the judge was so abandoned to pleasure that he refused, for a time, to listen to her request; he would not give himself the trouble to examine her case, though the crying injustice pleaded so powerfully for this distressed widow. She was not, however, intimidated by his refusal; she incessantly importuned him, till, by repeated representations of her distress, she filled his mind with such displeasing ideas, that he was obliged to do her justice, merely to free himself from her importunity. "Though," said he to himself, "I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." (Luke xviii. 4, 5.)

The sentiment conveyed by our blessed Saviour in this parable is very beautiful. We hence learn that the cries of the afflicted will, by being incessantly repeated, make an impression even on the stony hearts of wicked men, who glory in their impiety, and laugh at all the precepts of justice, virtue, and religion; and therefore cannot fail of being regarded by the benevolent Father of the universe, who listens to the petitions of his faithful servants, and pours on their heads the choicest of his blessings.

"Hear," said the blessed Jesus, "what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." (Luke xviii. 6, &c.) As if he had said, If this man, though destitute of the fear either of God or man, was thus prompted to espouse the cause of the widow, shall not a

righteous God, the Father of his people, avenge on the wicked the many evils they have done unto them, though he bear long with them? Certainly he will, and that in a most awful manner.

Our blessed Saviour, having thus enforced the duty of prayer in this expressive parable, asked the following apposite question: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" As if he had said, Notwithstanding all the miracles I have wrought, and the excellent doctrines I have delivered, shall I find, at my second coming, that faith among the children of men which might reasonably be expected? Will not most of them have abandoned the faith, wantonly asking, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

The blessed Jesus next rebuked the self-righteous Pharisees. But as these particulars are better illustrated by their opposites, he placed the character of this species of men in opposition to those of the humble; describing the reception each class met with from the Almighty in a parable of the Pharisee and publican, who went up together to the temple, at the time when the sacrifice was offered, to direct their petitions to the God of their fathers.

The Pharisee, having a high opinion of his own righteousness, went far into the court of the temple, that he might be as near the place of the Divine residence as possible. Here he offered his prayer, giving God the praise of his supposed righteousness; and, had he been possessed of any, he would have acted properly. "God," said he, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Having thus commended himself to God, he wrapped himself up in his own righteousness, and giving the poor publican a scornful look, walked away, perhaps to transgress some of the weightier matters of the law,—judgment, justice, and truth,—and to devour the houses of distressed widows and helpless orphans. But how different was the behaviour of the humble publican! Impressed with a deep sense of his own unworthiness, he would not even enter the courts of the temple, but stood afar off, and smote upon his breast, and, in the bitterness of his soul, earnestly implored the mercy of Omnipotence. "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke xviii. 13.)

Specious as the Pharisee's behaviour may seem, his prayer was an abomination to the Lord; while the poor publican, who confessed his guilt and implored mercy, was justified in the sight of God, rather than this arrogant boaster.

The parable sufficiently indicates that all the sons of men stand in need of mercy: both the strict Pharisee and the despised publican, and

the whole race of mankind, are sinners, and consequently all must implore pardon of their benevolent Creator. We must all ascend to the temple, and there pour forth our prayers before the throne of grace; for there he has promised ever to be present to grant the petitions of all who ask with sincerity and truth, through the Son of his love.

These parables were spoken in the town of Ephraim; and during his continuance in that city the Pharisees asked him whether he thought it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause. Our Saviour had twice before declared his opinion of this particular—once in Galilee, and once in Perea; it is therefore probable that the Pharisees were not

Christ blessing little Children. (L. Richter.)

ignorant of his sentiments, and that they asked the question then to find an opportunity of incensing the people against him, well knowing that the Israelites held the liberty which the law gave them of divorcing their wives as one of their chief privileges. But, however that be, Jesus was far from fearing the popular resentment, and accordingly declared the third time against arbitrary divorces. The Pharisees then asked him why they were commanded by Moses to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away, insinuating that Moses was so tender of their happiness that

he gave them liberty of putting away their wives when they saw occasion; to which Jesus answered, Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. As unlimited divorces were not permitted in the state of innocence, so neither shall they be under the gospel dispensation. "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Matt. xix. 9.)

The disciples were greatly surprised at their Master's decision; and though they held their peace while the Pharisees were present, yet they did not fail to ask him the reason on which he founded his determination when they were returned home. "And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." (Mark x. 10, &c.)

The practice of unlimited divorces, which prevailed among the Jews, gave great encouragement to family quarrels, were very destructive of happiness, and hindered the education of their common offspring. Besides, it greatly tended to make their children lose that reverence for them which is due to parents, as it was hardly possible for the children to avoid engaging in the quarrel. Our Lord's prohibition, therefore, of these divorces is founded on the strongest reasons, and greatly tends to promote the welfare of society.

Our Saviour having, in the course of his ministry, performed innumerable cures in different parts of the country, several persons, thinking, perhaps, that his power would be as great in preventing as in removing distempers, brought their children to him, desiring that he would put his hands upon them and bless them. The disciples, however, mistaking the intention, were angry with the persons, and rebuked them for endeavouring to give this trouble to their Master; but Jesus no sooner saw it than he was greatly displeased with his disciples, and ordered them not to hinder parents from bringing their children to him. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." (Luke xviii. 16.)

Such are those in a spiritual sense who are brought to a knowledge of their sins, and humbled for them in the sight of God.

Christ Blessing little Children

CHAPTER XXVII.

Our Lord departs from his retirement. Declares the only way of salvation. Shows the duty of improving the means of grace by the parable of the vineyard. Prediction of his suffering, and contention of the disciples about precedence in his kingdom.

THE period of our blessed Saviour's passion now approaching, he departed from Ephraim, and repaired by the way of Jericho towards Jerusalem; but, before he arrived at Jericho, a ruler of the synagogue came running to him, and kneeling down before him, asked him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matt. xix. 16.)

Though this young ruler pretended to pay great honour to our dear Redeemer, yet the whole was no more than a piece of raillery; for though he styled him good, yet he did not believe that he was sent from God, as sufficiently appears from his refusing to observe the counsel given him by Jesus; nor could his artful insinuations escape the piercing eye of the great Saviour of the world. He well knew his secret intentions, and beheld the inmost recesses of his soul, and accordingly rebuked him for his hypocritical address before he answered his question. "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." (Matt. xix. 17.) But as he had desired the advice of our blessed Jesus, who never refused it to any of the sons of men, he readily answered his question by telling him that he must observe all the moral precepts of the law, there being a necessary connection between the duties of piety towards the Almighty, and of justice and temperance towards men, the latter of which were much more difficult to counterfeit than the former. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love

thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" (Matt. xix. 17, &c.)

These commandments perhaps he had obeyed in the vague sense put upon them by the doctors and interpreters of the law, and therefore the character he gave of himself might be very just; for though he was far from being a person who feared God from his heart, he might have appeared, in the sight of men, as a person of a very fair character; and having maintained that character, notwithstanding his great riches, he certainly deserved commendation, and therefore might be loved by that benevolent Person who left the bosom of his Father to redeem lost mankind. But he was, at the same time, very faulty with regard to his love of sensual pleasures—a sin which might have escaped even his own observation, though it could not escape the all-seeing eye of the Son of God. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, willing to make him sensible of this secret desire of possessing the riches of this world, told him that if he aimed at perfection he should distribute his possessions among the poor and indigent, and become his disciple. "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." (Matt. xix. 21.)

His heart being set upon his possessions, he had no inclination to a religion that enjoins self-denial and parting with our darling sins. "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (Matt. xix. 22.)

This melancholy instance of the pernicious influence of riches over the mind of the children of men induced our blessed Saviour to caution his disciples against fixing their minds on things of such frightful tendency, by showing how very difficult it was for a rich man to procure an habitation in the regions of eternal happiness. "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel" (*i.e.*, a cable or large rope) "to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." (Matt. xix. 23, &c.)

If man be not assisted by the grace of God, it will be impossible for him to obtain the happy rewards of the kingdom of heaven; but, by the assistance of grace, which the Almighty never refuses to those who seek it with their whole heart, it is very possible.

This answer of the blessed Jesus was, however, far from satisfying his disciples, who had, doubtless, often reflected with pleasure on the high posts they were to enjoy in their

Master's kingdom. Peter seems particularly to have been disappointed, and therefore addressed his Master in the name of the rest, begging him to remember that his apostles had actually done what the young man had refused. They had abandoned their relations, their friends, their possessions, and their employments on his account, and therefore desired to know what reward they were to expect for these instances of their obedience, to which Jesus replied that they should not fail of a reward even in this life; for immediately after his resurrection, when he ascended to his Father, and entered on his mediatorial office, they should be advanced to the honour of judging the twelve tribes of Israel; that is, of ruling the church of Christ, which they were to plant in different parts of the earth. "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. xix. 28.)

Having given this answer to Peter, he next mentioned the rewards his other disciples should receive, both in this world and in that which is to come. They, said he, who have forsaken all for my sake shall be no losers in the end: their benevolent Father, who intends to give them possessions in the heavenly Canaan, will not fail to support them during their long and painful journey to that happy country, and raise them up friends who shall assist them with those necessaries they might have expected from their relations, had they not left them for my sake. Divine Providence will take care that they have everything valuable that could be given them by their relations, or they could desire from large possessions. They shall, indeed, be fed with the bread of sorrow; but this shall produce joys to which all the earthly pleasures bear no proportion; and, in the end, obtain everlasting life. They shall leave this vale of tears, with all its pains and sorrows, behind them, and fly to the bosom of their Almighty Father, the fountain of life and joy, where they shall be infinitely rewarded for all the sufferings they have undergone in this world.

Things shall then be reversed, and those who have been reviled and contemned on earth for the sake of the gospel shall be exalted to honour, glory, and immortality, while the others shall be consigned to eternal infamy. "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." (Matt. xix. 30.)

These words seem also to have been spoken to keep the disciples humble; for in all probability they at first understood the promise of their sitting on twelve thrones in a natural sense, as they were ready to construe every expression to a temporal kingdom, which they still expected their Master would erect upon earth. Our blessed Saviour, therefore, to remove all thoughts they

might entertain of this kind, told them that though he had described the rewards they were to expect for the ready obedience they had shown to his commands, and the pains they were to take in propagating the gospel among the children of men, yet these rewards were spiritual, and not confined to the Jews alone, but extended also to the Gentiles, who, in point of time, should excel the Jews, and universally embrace the gospel before that nation was converted.

To excite their ardent pressing forward in faith and good works, our Lord relates the parable of the householder, who at different hours of the day hired labourers to work in his vineyard. "The kingdom of heaven," says our blessed Saviour, "is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." (Matt. xx. 1—16.)

Such is the parable of the householder, as delivered by our Saviour; and, from the application he has made of it, it would not be difficult to interpret it. The dispensations of religion which God gave to mankind in different parts of the world are represented by the vineyard. The Jews, who were early members of the true church, and obliged to obey the law of Moses, are the labourers which the

householder hired early in the morning.

The Gentiles, who were converted at several times, by the various interpositions of Providence, to the knowledge and worship of the true God, are the labourers hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hour; and the invitation given at the eleventh hour implies the calling of persons in the eve of life to the knowledge of the gospel. The law of Moses was a heavy yoke, and therefore the obedience to its precepts was very elegantly represented by bearing the heat and burden of the whole day. But the proselyted Gentiles paid obedience only to some particular precepts of the law; bore but part of its weight; and were therefore represented by those who were hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hours; while those heathens who regulated their conduct by the law of nature only, and esteemed the works of justice, piety, temperance, and charity as their whole duty, are beautifully represented as labouring only one hour in the cool of the evening.

When the evening was come, and each labourer was to receive his wages, they were all placed on an equal footing, these rewards being the privileges and advantages of the gospel. The Jews, who had borne the grievous yoke of the Mosaic ceremonies, murmured when they found the Gentiles were admitted to its privileges without being subject to their ceremonial worship. But we must not urge the circumstance of the reward so far as to fancy that either Jews or Gentiles merited the blessings of the gospel by their having laboured faithfully in the vineyard, or having behaved well under their several dispensations

The glorious gospel, with all its blessings, was bestowed entirely by the free grace of God, and without anything in men to merit it; besides, it was offered promiscuously to all, whether good or bad, and embraced by persons of all characters. The conclusion of the parable deserves our utmost attention; we should often meditate upon it, and take care to make our calling and election sure.

After Jesus had finished these discourses, he continued his journey towards Jerusalem, where the chief priests and elders, soon after the resurrection of Lazarus, issued a proclamation promising a reward to any one who should apprehend him. In all probability this was the reason why the disciples were astonished at the alacrity of our Lord during this journey, while they themselves followed him trembling. Jesus, therefore, thought proper to repeat the prophecies concerning his sufferings, in order to show his disciples that they were entirely voluntary; adding, that though the Jews should put him to death, yet, instead of weakening, it should increase their faith, especially as he would rise again on the third day from the dead. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be ac-

complished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again." (Luke xviii. 31—33.)

As this prediction manifestly tended to the confirmation of the ancient prophecies, it must have given the greatest encouragement to his disciples, had they understood and applied it in a proper manner; but they were so ignorant in the Scriptures that they had no idea of what he meant. "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." (Luke xviii. 34.)

The sons of Zebedee were so ignorant that they thought their Master, by his telling them he would rise again from the dead, meant that he would then erect his empire, and accordingly begged that he would confer on them the chief posts in his kingdom, which they expressed by desiring to be seated, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in allusion to his placing the twelve apostles upon the twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel.

This race, ever since our Saviour's transfiguration, had conceived very high notions of his kingdom, and possibly of their own merit also, because they had been admitted to behold that miracle. But Jesus told them they were ignorant of the nature of the honour they requested; and since they desired to share with him in his glory, asked them if they were willing to share with him also in his sufferings. "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matt. xx. 22.)

The two disciples, ravished with the prospect of the dignity they were aspiring after, replied, without hesitation, that they were both able and willing to share any hardship their Master might meet with in the way to his kingdom, to which he answered that they should certainly share with him in his troubles and afflictions, but that they had asked a favour which was not his to give. "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." (Matt. xx. 23.)

This ambitious request of the two brothers raised the indignation of the rest of the disciples, who, thinking themselves equally deserving the principal posts in the Messiah's kingdom, were highly offended at the arrogance of the sons of Zebedee. Jesus, therefore, in order to restore harmony among his disciples, told them that his kingdom was very different from those of the present world, and the greatness of his disciples did not, like that of secular princes, consist in reigning over others in an absolute and despotic manner. "Ye know

that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. xx. 25—28.) Ye know that rank and precedence denote merit of character here; but Christian greatness and spiritual precedence consist in humility, of which Christ your Saviour was made an eminent pattern.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The benevolent Saviour restores sight to the blind. Kindly regards Zaccheus the publican. Delivers the parable of the servants entrusted with their lord's money. Accepts the kind offices of Mary. Makes a public entry into Jerusalem.

JESUS, with his disciples and the multitude that accompanied him, was now arrived at Jericho, a famous city of Palestine, and the second in the kingdom. Near this town Jesus cured two blind men, who sat by the road begging, and expressed their belief in him as the Messiah. "And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David." (Matt. xx. 29—31.)

This importunate request had its desired effect on the Son of God. He stood still, and called them to him, that by their manner of walking spectators might be convinced that they were really blind. As soon as they approached him he asked them what they requested with such earnestness; to which the beggars answered, that they might receive their sight. "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" They say, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." This request was not made in vain. Their compassionate Saviour touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight and followed him, glorifying and praising God.

After conferring sight on these beggars, Zaccheus, chief of the publicans, having often heard the fame of our Saviour's miracles, was desirous of seeing his person; but the lowness of his stature preventing him from satisfying his curiosity, "he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him: for he was to pass that way." As Jesus approached the

place where he was, "he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." (Luke xix. 5.)

The publican expressed his joy at our Lord's condescending to visit him, carried him to his house, and showed him all the marks of civility in his power. But the people, when

Blind Bartimeus. (*W. Gale.*)

they saw he was going to the house of a publican, condemned his conduct, as not conformable to the character of a prophet. Zaccheus seems to have heard these unjust reflections, and therefore was willing to justify himself before Jesus and his attendants. "And Zaccheus stood, and

said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham." (Luke xix. 8, &c.)

Our Saviour, further to convince the people that the design of his mission was to seek and to restore life and salvation to lost and perishing sinners, adds: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." While Jesus continued in the house of Zaccheus the publican he spake a parable to his followers, who supposed, at his arrival in the royal city, he would erect the long-expected kingdom of the Messiah. "A certain nobleman," said he, "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." (Luke xix. 12—27.)

In this parable we have the character of three sorts of men delineated by our blessed Saviour himself; namely, the true disciples of the Messiah, the hypocrites, and the openly profane. And the treatment these servants met with represents the final sentences that will be passed

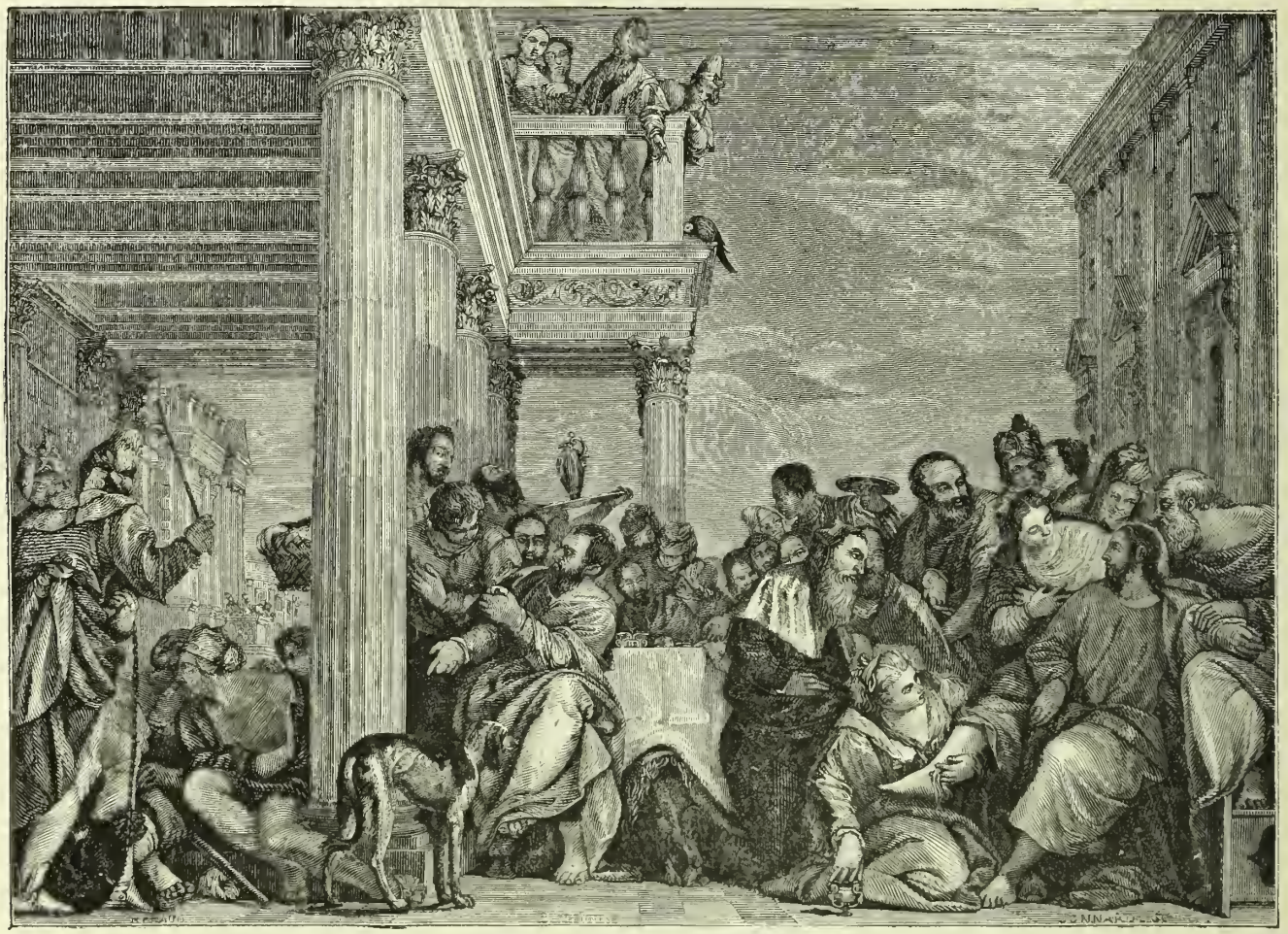
upon them by the awful Judge of the whole earth. The true disciples shall be rewarded with the honours and pleasures of immortality; the hypocrites stripped of all the advantages they so often boasted, and loaded with eternal infamy; and the open enemies of Christ shall suffer punishment, severe in proportion to the degree of their guilt.

But though this be the general sense of the parable, yet it has also a particular relation to the time when it was spoken, and intended to teach the disciples that though they might imagine that the Messiah's kingdom

The Judgment. (*J. E. Steinle.*)

was speedily to be erected, and they were soon to partake of its happiness, yet this was not to happen before the death of their Master; that they themselves must perform a long and laborious course of services before they received their eternal reward; that after his resurrection, when he had obtained the kingdom, he would return from his seat of majesty, and reckon with all his servants, and reward every one according to the improvements he had made in the trust committed to his care; and that he would execute, in an exemplary manner, his vengeance on those who re-

fused to let him reign over them, and did all in their power to hinder the erection of his kingdom among others. After speaking this parable Jesus left the house of Zaccheus the publican, and continued his journey towards Jerusalem, where he proposed to celebrate the Passover, and was earnestly expected by the people, who came up to purify themselves, and who began to doubt whether he would venture to come to the feast. This delay, however, was occasioned by the proclamation issued by the chief priests, promising a reward to any who would discover the place of his retirement. "Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had



Mary anointing the Feet of Christ. (*Paul Veronese.*)

given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him." (John xi. 57.)

Six days before the Passover Jesus arrived at Bethany, and repaired to the house of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. "There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

P. P. RUBENS PINXT. W. GREATBACH SCULPT.

Mary Anointing the feet of Christ.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." (John xii. 2, &c.)

As Bethany was not above two miles from Jerusalem, the news of his arrival was soon spread through the capital, and great numbers of the citizens came to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, together with the Great Prophet who had wrought so stupendous a miracle, and many of them were convinced both of the resurrection of the former and the Divinity of the latter; but the news of their conversion, together with the reason of it, being currently reported in Jerusalem, the chief priests were soon sensible of the weight so great a miracle must have on the minds of the people, and therefore determined, if possible, to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death.

Our blessed Lord, though he knew the design of the Jews upon him, also knew that it became him to fulfil all righteousness, and was so far from declining to visit Jerusalem that he even entered it in a public manner. "When they were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." (Matt. xxi. 1—11.)

Some of the weakest of the deistical tribe have sought to turn this circumstance into ridicule; but in this they discover the height of ignorance, because they judge by the prejudices of our own times and country. And when they who look no further than the manner and the customs before them examine this part of the sacred

story by the standard of modern prejudices, they see, or think they see, something quite inconsistent with the gravity and dignity of the person pretending to be King of the Jews, when Christ is represented entering in triumph into Jerusalem, sitting on an ass. But, however contemptible an ass or a man riding on that creature may be at present, it was not so from the beginning. In many countries, and particularly in Judea, persons of the highest distinction usually rode upon asses. The gover-

The White Ass.

nors of Israel are described in the song of Deborah as "riding on white asses." (Judges v. 10.) And the thirty sons of Jair, who was judge and prince over Israel twenty-two years, are said to have ridden on thirty asses. (Judges x. 4.) And another judge is recorded to have had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on seventy ass colts. (Judges xii. 14.)

It may, however, be asked, that supposing it was a usual thing to ride on an ass, why should this common practice be mentioned in relation to the Messiah as a mark of distinction? Might not the prophet, upon this supposition, as well have said, He shall come walking on foot? and would he not have been as well known by one character as by the other? Besides, if we turn to the book of Zechariah, where this prophecy is to be found, we shall see the person there described to be a king, a just king, and one having salvation; and what is there in this character of riding on the foal of an ass that is peculiar to a king, to a just king, and to one who was to bring salvation and deliverance to his people?

These questions, however difficult they may at first sight appear, are easily answered, not by considering the state and condition of kings in general, but that peculiar to a king of Israel, on which the propriety of this character is founded.

If we look into the history of the rise and fall of nations, we shall generally find that their prosperity and success were proportional to the force and power and to the conduct and ability of their leaders. But with the Jews, who from slaves in Egypt became a powerful people, the case was very different. The best and greatest of their kings, and he who carried their empire to its greatest height, has left us another account of their affairs: "The people," says he, "got not the land in possession by their own sword,

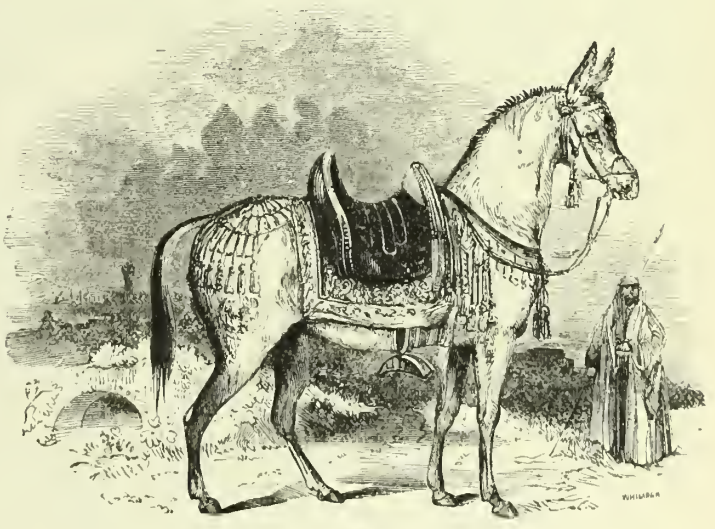
neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them." (Psalm xliv. 3.)

When we read these and other similar passages, we are apt to ascribe them to the piety and devotion of the Psalmist, to consider them only as an acknowledgment of God's general providence in the affairs of the world, and hence are apt to overlook, or not sufficiently consider, the historical truth they contain.

It is true, indeed, that all success in the strictest sense may be ascribed to God; that it is he who giveth victory unto kings; but he generally makes use of natural means, and it is no offence to his providence that kings maintain their thousands of horse and foot to secure themselves and their dominions. But with the Jews it was very different: they were never so weak as when they made themselves strong; never so certainly ruined as when their force was great enough to create a confidence in themselves. For God had taken the defence of Israel upon himself; and whenever the people took it out of his hands to place it in their own they were sure to be undone.

Nay, so tender was God of his honour in this respect, and so concerned to justify his promise to protect Israel in the eyes of the world, that he would not always permit natural causes to interfere in their deliverance, lest the people should grow doubtful to whom they ought to ascribe their victories; and for the same reason it was that he commanded the people to have neither horses nor chariots of war for their defence: not because they were thought useless in war, for it is well known that they were the strength of ancient kingdoms, but because God himself had undertaken their defence, and he wanted neither horse nor foot to fight their battles.

This law, as is evident from the



The Mule.

Jewish history, was observed for near four hundred years; namely, till about the middle of Solomon's reign. And while David swayed the sceptre of Israel, when the kingdom was carried to its utmost height, he himself rode upon a mule, and provided no better equipage for his son on the day of his coronation. "Cause Solomon my son," said David, "to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: and let Zadok the priest and Nathan

the prophet anoint him there king over Israel." (1 Kings i. 33, 34.) And when that pious prince looked back, and contemplated this state of things, he might well say, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." (Psalm xx. 7.)

In the reign of Solomon things quickly changed their aspect. He married the daughter of the king of Egypt, and opened a commerce between that country and his own,

Christ's Entry into Jerusalem. (*G. Jäger.*)

by which means he soon acquired an immense number of horses and chariots; and all his successors, when they had it in their power, followed his example. But what did the kingdom gain by this change? They were before a rich and flourishing people; but after breaking this law of the Most High their wealth and power gradually declined, till at last their habitations were laid waste, their temple and cities burnt with fire, and they themselves carried captive into a strange land.

It may, perhaps, be asked wherein the guilt of having a country full of horses consisted. There is certainly no moral crime in purchasing and keeping these creatures; but the kings of Israel were exalted to the throne on condition that they should renounce the assistance of chariots and horses, and depend upon God for success in the day of battle.

Having thus considered this law, and the consequences that resulted from the breach of it, let us now look back to the prophecy relating to the Messiah: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem." (Zech. ix. 9, &c.)

Such is the King who was to save the descendants of Jacob; and what sort of a king could be expected? Is it possible to imagine that God would send a king to save them who should be like the kings which had undone them? Is it not more reasonable to think that he would resemble those who had been deliverers of their country—kings who feared God, and therefore feared no enemy; who, though mounted on asses, and colts the foals of asses, were able to put to flight the thousands and tens of thousands of chariots and horses that came against them?

The King foretold by the prophet was also to be just, meek, and lowly; but how could he have deserved that character had he appeared in the pride and pomp of war, surrounded with horses and chariots, in direct opposition to the law of God? Or, as he was to bring salvation to the people, could he make use of those means which God never had prospered, and which he declared he never would?

It appears, then, that it was essential to the character of a King of Israel who was to be just and lowly, and to bring salvation with him, that he should come riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass; but if any doubt can yet remain, let the prophet himself explain it, who, immediately after the description of the promised King, adds, "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem;" plainly intimating that the character given of the Messiah, that he should ride on an ass, was in opposition to the pride of their warlike kings, who, by their great strength in chariots and horses, had ruined themselves and their people.

Thus have we undeniably shown the intention of the prophet when he foretold that the Messiah should ride on an ass; and from hence it appears that the enemies of revelation have not the least reason for turning this transaction into ridicule. Was it any reproach to Christ to ride into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass, when David, the greatest of his ancestors, and Solomon, the wisest, as

long as he was wise, rode in the same manner? Can the Jews object to this circumstance, and yet talk of the glories of David and the magnificence of Solomon, who, in the midst of all that glory and magnificence, did the very same thing? Or can they stumble at this character of the Messiah without forgetting by what princes their ancestors were served, and by what undone?

But to return from this digression. The prodigious multitude that now accompanied Jesus filled the Pharisees and great men with malice and envy, because every method they had taken to hinder the people from following Jesus had proved ineffectual. "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him." (John xii. 19.)

But when our blessed Saviour drew near the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by the rejoicing multitude, notwithstanding the many affronts he had there received, he beheld the city, and with a divine generosity and benevolence which nothing can equal, wept over it, and in the most pathetic manner lamented the calamities which he foresaw were coming upon it because its inhabitants were ignorant of the time of their visitation. "If," said he, "thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (Luke xix. 42, &c.)

Behold here, ye wandering mortals, behold an example and generosity infinitely superior to any furnished by the heathen world—an example highly worthy for them to imitate and admire!

When Jesus, surrounded by the multitude, entered Jerusalem, the whole city was moved on account of the prodigious concourse of people that accompanied him, and their continual acclamations. Jesus rode immediately to the temple; but it being evening, he soon left the city, to the great discouragement of the people, who expected he was immediately to have taken into his hands the reins of government. "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve." (Mark xi. 11.)

CHAPTER XXIX.

Jesus pronounces a curse upon the fig-tree. Expels the profaners of the temple. Asserts his Divine authority, and delivers two parables.

AT the earliest dawn our blessed Saviour left Bethany to visit again the capital of Judea; and as he pursued his journey he saw at a distance a fig-tree, which, from its fulness of leaves, promised abundance of fruit. This inviting object induced him to approach it, in expectation of finding figs, for he was hungry, and the season for gathering them was not yet arrived; but, on his coming to the tree, he found it to be really barren, upon which the blessed Jesus said to it, "Let no fruit grow on thee for ever." (Matt. xxi. 19.)

This action, which was purely emblematical, and prefigured the speedy ruin of the Jewish nation on account of its unfruitfulness under all the advantages it then enjoyed, has, by the enemies of revelation, been represented as an action unbecoming the Redeemer of mankind. But if they had fully considered its intention they would have been convinced that, like the rest of his miracles, it was done with a gracious intention; namely, to awaken his countrymen from their lethargy, and by repentance prevent the total ruin of their church and nation.

Being disappointed in finding fruit on the fig-tree, our blessed Saviour pursued his journey to Jerusalem; and on his arrival went straightway to the temple, the outer court of which he found full of merchandise. A sight like this vexed his meek and righteous soul, so that he drove them all out of the temple, overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and would not suffer any vessel to be carried through the temple, saying unto them, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." (Matt. xxi. 13.)

St. Jerome considers this as one of

the greatest of all our Saviour's miracles; and it must be owned that the circumstances are very extraordinary, that one man should undertake so bold and execute so hazardous a task—one man without a commission from Cæsar, without any countenance from the Jewish rulers, without any arms either to terrify the multitude or defend himself—that he should cast out the whole tribe of mercenary traffickers, wrest from those worshippers of wealth their darling idol, and trample under foot their great Diana; and all this without tumult or opposition, not one of the sacrilegious rabble daring to move a hand or open a mouth. Whoever, I say, reflects on the fierce and ungovernable nature of an incensed populace, or considers the outrageous zeal of Demetrius and the craftsmen on a less irritating occasion, may possibly find himself almost, if not altogether, of the Latin father's opinion.

There is a tradition that a certain bright and dazzling lustre darted from his eyes, which they were unable to bear, as the people could not behold the face of Moses for the glory that surrounded him. But, as the Scriptures take no notice of this transcendent lustre, we must only adore the greatness of the fact, and at the same time so improve this miracle to our spiritual advantage as to secure, by accepting his grace, the power of this mighty reformer on our sides, that when he shall come in glory we may be safe under the shadow of his almighty wings, while he takes fearful vengeance on those who prostitute the most sacred places to mercenary purposes.

Having dispersed this venal clan, the people brought unto him the blind, the lame, and the diseased, who were all healed by the Son of God, so that the very children, when they saw the many miraculous cures he performed, proclaimed him to be the great Son of David, the long-expected Messiah.

Such behaviour not a little incensed the Pharisees; but they feared the people, and therefore only asked him if he heard what the children said, insinuating that he ought to rebuke them, and not suffer them thus to load him with the highest praises. But Jesus, instead of giving a direct answer to their question, repeated a passage out of the eighth Psalm. "Have ye never read," said the blessed Jesus, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" giving them to understand that the meanest of God's works have been made instrumental in spreading his praise.

The evening being now come, Jesus, with his disciples, left the city and retired to Bethany, where his benevolent miracle in raising Lazarus from the dead had procured him many friends, among whom he was always in safety. The next morning, as they were returning from Jerusalem, the disciples were astonished at beholding the fig-tree that had been but the morning before declared barren dried up from the roots. They

had, in all probability, forgotten what our Saviour had said to this fig-tree till its dry and withered aspect brought it again to their memory. Peter, on seeing this astonishing phenomenon, said unto Jesus, "Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away;" to which Jesus answered, that whoever had faith in the Almighty, or thoroughly believed in this miracle, should be able to do much greater things than the withering of the fig-tree. "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith." (Mark xi. 22, 23.)

Our Lord added that whatsoever they should ask by faith they should receive, and concluded by giving them direction concerning prayer, which was necessary to increase the faith he mentioned. "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." (Mark xi. 25, 26.)

During the time the blessed Jesus remained in the temple certain proselyted Greeks who came up to worship at Jerusalem desired to see him, having long cherished expectations of beholding the promised Messiah. Accordingly they applied to Philip, a native of Bethsaida, who mentioned it to Andrew, and he told it to Jesus, upon which our blessed Saviour told his disciples that he should soon be honoured with the conversion of the Gentiles. "The hour is come," said he, "that the Son of man should be glorified;" but declared that, before this glorious event happened, he must suffer death, illustrating the necessity there was of his dying by the similitude of casting grain into the earth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;" (John xii. 24;) adding that since it was absolutely necessary for him, their Lord and Master, to suffer the pains of death before he ascended the throne of his glory, so they, as his followers, must also expect to be persecuted and spitefully used for his name's sake; but if they persevered, and even resolved to lose their lives in his service, he would reward their constancy with a crown of glory; and at the same time he tacitly insinuated that the strangers, if their desire of conversing with him proceeded from a hope of obtaining from him temporal preferments, would find themselves sadly disappointed. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." (John xii. 26.)

Our blessed Saviour was now so greatly moved that he uttered in a very pathetic manner his grief, and addressed his heavenly Father for succour in his distress. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." (John xii. 27.)

This should teach us that prayer is the only method of easing the mind overwhelmed with distress, but at the same time to be always resigned to the Divine will; for though the weakness of human nature may shrink when persecution or sufferings of any kind appear, yet, by reflecting on the wisdom, goodness, and power of God to deliver us, we ought to support every trial, however severe, with patience, as he doubtless proposes some happy end by these afflictions.

Our blessed Lord, having made a short prayer to his Father, begged of God to demonstrate the truth of his mission by some token which could not be resisted. "Father, glorify thy name." Nor had he hardly uttered these words before he was answered by an audible voice from heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The miracles thou hast already performed have glorified my name, and I will still continue to glorify it by other miracles to be wrought before the sons of men.

This voice was evidently preternatural, resembling thunder in loudness, but sufficiently articulate to be understood by those who heard our blessed Saviour pray to his heavenly Father; and Jesus told his disciples that it was not given for his sake, but to confirm their faith in his mission. "This voice," said he, "came not because of me, but for your sakes." It came to confirm what I have told you relating to my sufferings, death, resurrection, and the conversion of the whole Gentile world to the Christian religion.

And accordingly he communicated this comfortable reflection to his disciples, telling them that the time was at hand when the kingdom of Satan should be destroyed, and that of the Messiah exalted. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John xii. 31, 32.)

The people, not understanding the drift of this affirmation, replied, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?" (John xii. 34.) Our Lord, in answer, told them that they should soon be deprived of his presence and miracles, and therefore they would do well to listen attentively to his precepts, firmly believe the doctrines he delivered, and wisely improve them to their eternal advantage, for otherwise they would be soon overtaken with spiritual blindness, and rendered incapable of inheriting the promises of the gospel; that while they enjoyed the benefit of his

Sufferings of our Saviour. (Guercino.)

preaching and miracles, which sufficiently proved the truth of his mission from the Most High, they should believe on him, for by that means alone they could become the children of God. "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." (John xiii. 35, 36.)

Having thus addressed the multitude, he retired privately from Jerusalem, probably to Bethany. But notwithstanding the many miracles our great Redeemer had wrought in presence of this perverse and stiff-necked people, the generality of them refused to own him for the Messiah, being filled with the vain expectations of a temporal prince, who was to rule over all the kingdoms of the earth, and place his throne in Jerusalem. Some, indeed, even of the rulers believed on him, though they thought it prudent to conceal their faith, lest they should, like the blind man, be excommunicated or put out of the synagogue, valuing the good opinion of men above the approbation of the Almighty.

Nevertheless, to inspire such as believed on him with courage, he cried in the temple, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." He that acknowledges the divinity of my mission acknowledges the power and grace of God, on whose special errand I am thus sent; adding, He that seeth the miracles I perform, seeth the operations of that Omnipotent Power by which I act. I am the Sun of Righteousness, whose beams dispel the darkness of ignorance in which the sons of men are involved, and am come to deliver all who believe on me out of that palpable darkness. You must not, however, expect that I will at present execute my judgment upon those who refuse to embrace the doctrines of the gospel; for I am not come to condemn and punish, but to save the world, and consequently to try every gentle and winning method to reclaim the wicked from the error of their ways, and turn their feet into the paths of life and salvation. They shall not, however, escape unpunished who neglect the instructions and offers of salvation now made to them, for the doctrines I have preached shall bear witness against them at the awful tribunal of the last day; and as it has aggravated their sin, so it shall then heighten their punishment.

While Jesus was thus preaching in the temple a deputation of priests and elders was sent from the Supreme Council to ask him concerning the nature of the authority by which he acted, whether it was as prophet, priest, or king, as no other person had a right to make any alterations either in church or state; and, if he laid claim to either of those characters, from whom he received it.

But our blessed Saviour, instead of giving a direct answer to the questions of the Pharisees, asked them another, promising if they resolved his question he would also answer theirs. "I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" (Matt. xxi. 24, 25.)

The question puzzled the priests. They considered, on the one hand, that if it was from God it would oblige them to acknowledge the authority of Jesus, John having more than once publicly declared him to be the Messiah; and, on the other, if they peremptorily denied the authority of John, they would be in danger of being stoned by the people, who in general considered him as a prophet. They therefore thought it the most eligible method to answer that they could not tell from whence John's baptism was. Thus, by declining to answer the question asked them by Jesus, they left him at liberty to decline giving the council the satisfaction they had sent to demand; and at the same time they plainly confessed that they were unable to pass any sentence on John the Baptist, notwithstanding he claimed the character of a messenger from God, and they had sent to examine his pretensions. This was, in effect, to acknowledge that they were incapable of judging of any prophet whatsoever. Well, therefore, might the blessed Jesus say, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." You have no right to ask, since you have confessed you are unable to judge; and therefore I shall not satisfy your impertinent inquiry.

But because this deputation had said that they were ignorant from whence the baptism of John was, our blessed Saviour sharply rebuked them, conveying his reproof in the parable of the two sons commanded to work in their father's vineyard, and asking their opinion of the two, made them condemn themselves.

"A certain man," said he, "had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." But this ungracious youth very roughly answered the kind command of his father, and, without the least preface or appellation of respect, answered, "I will not." But after reflecting on the impropriety and indecency of such behaviour to his kind and indulgent father, he repented of what he had done, and went to work in the vineyard. The father, having met with so sharp a reply from the former son, had recourse to the other, and in the same manner ordered him to work that day in his vineyard.

This son was very different from the former, and in a very dutiful manner said, "I go, sir." But, notwithstanding this seeming obedience, he delayed to do as his father desired; he did not go to work in the vineyard. The temper and behaviour of this second son were exactly con-

formable to those of the Pharisees. They gave the Almighty the most honourable titles, and professed the utmost zeal for his service in their prayers and praises, but at the same time refused to do any part of the work that he enjoined them. In the character of the other son the disposition of the publicans and harlots is well described. They neither professed nor promised to do the will of their Creator; but when they came to reflect seriously on their conduct, and the offers of mercy which were so kindly made them, they submitted to our Saviour, and, in consequence of their faith, amended their lives.

Having thus finished the parable, our Lord asked the Pharisees, "Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first." They did not immediately perceive that by this answer they condemned themselves till our Saviour made a just application of the parable in this sharp, but just rebuke: "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not," nor entered into your Father's vineyard, though, like the second son, ye promised in the most fair and candid manner; "but the publicans and the harlots believed him," repented of their former disobedience, and entered into the vineyard.

The blessed Jesus did not only rebuke them for rejecting the preaching of the Baptist, but represented the crime of the nation in rejecting all the prophets which had been sent since they became a nation—among the rest, the only-begotten Son of the Most High; warning them at the same time of their danger, and the punishment that would inevitably ensue, if they continued in their rebellion. The outward economy of religion, in which they gloried, would be taken from them, their relation to God as his people cancelled, and the national constitution destroyed; but, because these topics were extremely disagreeable, he delivered them under the veil of the following parable. "There was," said he, "a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country."

The comparison of the church to a vineyard is frequent in the sacred Scripture; but this particular parable, for the fuller conviction of the Jews, is expressly taken from the fifth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, with which they could not fail of being well acquainted, nor ignorant of its meaning, as the prophet at the end of it adds, "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." Our Saviour, therefore, continued the metaphor, telling them that "when the time of

the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." The Almighty sent the prophets to exhort the Jews to entertain just sentiments of religion, and tread the paths of virtue; but the Jews, extremely irritated at the prophets for the freedom they used in reproving their sins, persecuted and slew them with unrelenting fury.

Their wickedness, however, in killing these messengers did not instantly provoke the Almighty to pour down his vengeance upon them; he sent more prophets to exhort and reclaim them, but they met with no better fate than the former. His mercy, however, still continued, and, that no means might be left untried, he sent unto them his own Son, whose authority, being clearly established by undeniable miracles, ought to have been acknowledged cheerfully by these wicked men; but how different was the consequence! "When the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." (Matt. xxi. 38—41.)

Shocked at this awful representation, the Pharisees exclaimed and said, "God forbid;" surely these husbandmen will not proceed to such desperate iniquity; surely the vineyard will not thus be taken from them. But, to confirm the truth of this, our Saviour added a remarkable prophecy of himself and his rejection from Psalm cxviii. "Did ye never," said he, "read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" (Matt. xxi. 42.)

The rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, and the reception he met with among the Gentiles, all brought to pass by the providence of God, are wonderful events; and therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The chief priest and Pharisees being afraid to apprehend Jesus, he was at liberty to proceed in the offices of his ministry. Accordingly, he delivered another parable, wherein he described, on the one hand, the bad success which the preaching of the gospel was to meet with among the Jews; and, on the other, the cheerful reception given it among the Gentiles. This gracious design of the Almighty in giving the gospel to the children of men our blessed

Saviour illustrated by the behaviour of a certain king, who, in honour of his son, made a great feast, to which he invited many guests. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son." This marriage supper, or great feast, signifies the joys of heaven, which are properly compared to an elegant entertainment, on account of their exquisiteness and duration, and are here said to be prepared in honour of the Son of God, because they are bestowed on men in consequence of his suffering in their stead and behalf.

Some time before the supper was ready, the servants were sent forth to call the guests to the wedding; *i.e.* when the fulness of time approached, the Jews, as being the peculiar people of God, were first called by John the Baptist, and afterwards by Christ himself; but they refused all these benevolent calls of mercy, rejected the kind invitations of the gospel, though pressed by the preaching of the Messiah and his forerunner. After our Saviour's resurrection and ascension the apostles were sent forth to inform the Jews that the gospel covenant was established, mansions in heaven prepared, and nothing wanting but the cheerful acceptance of the honour designed them. "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." But these messengers were as unsuccessful as the former. The Jews, undervaluing the favour offered them, mocked at the message; and some of them, more rude than the rest, insulted, beat, and slew the servants that had been sent to call them to the marriage supper of the Lamb. "But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." This branch of the parable plainly predicted the destruction of the Jews by the Roman armies, called here the armies of the Almighty, because they were appointed by him to execute vengeance on that once favourite, but now rebellious people.

The Jews having thus rejected the benevolent calls of the gospel, the king again sent forth his servants into the countries of the Gentiles, with orders to compel all that they met with to come in to the marriage. This was immediately done, and the wedding was furnished with guests; but, when the king came into the apartment, "he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. xxii. 11—14.)

By the conclusion of the parable

we learn that the profession of the Christian religion will not save a man unless he acts from Christian principles. Let us, therefore, who have obeyed the call, and are by profession the people of God, think often on that awful day when the King will come in to see his guests, when the Almighty will, with the greatest strictness, view every soul that lays claim to the joys of heaven; let us think of the speechless confusion that will seize such as have not on the wedding garment, and of the inexorable anxiety with which they will be consigned to weeping and gnashing of teeth; and let us remember that to have seen for awhile the light of the gospel and the fair beamings of an eternal hope will add deeper and more sensible horrors to these gloomy caverns. On the other hand, to animate and encourage us, let us anticipate the joyful hour which will consign us to bliss immortal.

The Pools of Solomon.

CHAPTER XXX.

The blessed Jesus wisely retorts on the Pharisees and Sadducees, who propound an intricate question to him. Settles the most important point of the law. Enforces his mission and doctrine; and foretells the judgment that would fall upon the Pharisaical tribe.

THIS representation of the state of the finally impenitent appearing to be levelled at the Pharisees, they immediately concerted with the Herodians and Sadducees on the most proper method of putting Jesus to death. It is sufficiently evident that their hatred was now carried to the highest pitch, because the most violent enmity which had so long subsisted between the two sects was on this occasion suspended, and they joined together to execute their cruel determination on the Son of God. They, however, thought it most eligible to act very cautiously, and endeavour, if possible, to catch some hasty expression from him, that they might render him odious to the people, and procure something against him that might serve as a basis for his persecution. Accordingly they sent some of their disciples to him, with orders to feign themselves just men, who maintained the greatest veneration for the Divine law, and dreaded nothing more than the doing anything inconsistent with its precepts; and, under this specious cloak of hypocrisy, to beg his determination of an affair that had long lain heavy on their consciences; namely, the paying tribute to Cæsar, which they thought inconsistent with their zeal for religion. This question was, it seems, furiously debated in our Saviour's time; one Judas, a native of Galilee, having inspired the people with a notion that taxes to a foreign power were absolutely unlawful. A doctrine so pleasing to the worldly-minded Jews could not fail of friends, especially among the lower class, and therefore must have many partisans among the multitude that then surrounded the Son of God. The priests therefore imagined that it was not in his power to decide the

point without rendering himself obnoxious to some of the parties: if he should say it was lawful to pay the taxes, they believed that the people, in whose hearing the question was proposed, would be incensed against him, not only as a base pretender, who, on being attacked, publicly renounced the character of the Messiah which he had assumed among his friends, but also as a flatterer of princes and a betrayer of the liberties of his country—one who taught a doctrine inconsistent with the known privileges of the people of God; but if he should affirm that it was unlawful to pay the tribute, they determined to inform the governor, who they hoped would punish him as a former of sedition. Highly elated with their project, they accordingly came, and after passing an encomium on the truth of his mission, his courage, and impartiality, they

Roman Procession.

proposed this famous question: "Master," said they, "we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth." (Mark xii. 14.) "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" (Matt. xxii. 17.)

But the blessed Jesus saw their secret intentions, and accordingly called them hypocrites, to signify that though they made conscience and a regard for the Divine will their pretence for proposing this question, he saw through the thin veil that concealed their design from the eyes of mortals, and knew that their intention was to ensnare him.

He, however, did not decline answering their question, but previously desired to see a piece of the tribute money. The piece was accordingly produced, and proved

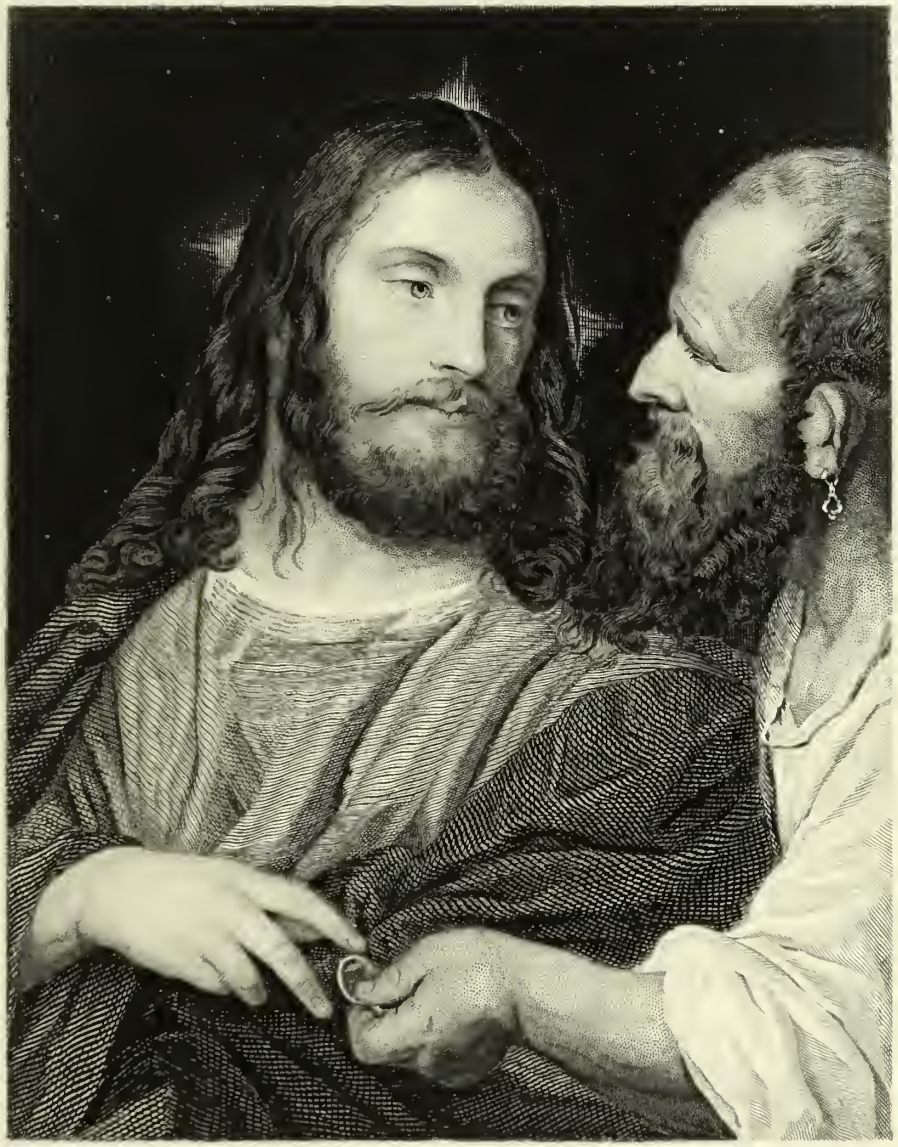
to be coined by the Romans, upon which our blessed Saviour answered them, Since this money bears the image of Cæsar, it is his; and by making use of it you acknowledge his authority. But, at the same time that you discharge your duty to the civil magistrate, you should never forget the duty you owe to your God, remembering that as you bear the image of the great, the omnipotent King, you are his subjects, and ought to pay him the tribute of your hearts, and serve him to the very utmost of your power.

The Pharisees and their followers, under a pretence of religion, often justified sedition; but the Herodians, in order to ingratiate themselves with the reigning powers, made them a complement of their consciences, complying with whatever they enjoined, however opposite their commands might be to the Divine law. Our Lord, therefore, adapted his answer to them both, exhorting them, in their regards to God and the magistrate, to give each his due, there being no inconsistency between their rights when their rights only are insisted on.

So unexpected an answer quite disconcerted and silenced these crafty enemies. They were astonished both at his having discovered their design, and his wisdom in avoiding the snare they had so artfully laid for him. "When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way." (Matt. xxii. 22.)

Though our Lord thus wisely obviated their crafty designs, enemies came against him from every quarter. The Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of a future state, together with the existence of angels and spirits, first returned to the charge, proposing to him their strongest argument against the resurrection, which they deduced from the law given by Moses with regard to marriage. "Master," said they, "Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife." (Luke xx. 28, &c.)

The Sadducees, who believed the soul to be nothing more than a refined matter, were persuaded that if there were any future state it must resemble the present; and that, being in that state material and mortal, the human race could not be continued, nor the individuals rendered happy, without the pleasures and conveniences of marriage, and hence considered it as a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the resurrection, or a future state, that every man's wife should be restored to him.



The Tribute Money

But this argument our blessed Saviour soon confuted by telling the Sadducees they were ignorant of the power of God, who had created spirit as well as matter, and who can render man completely happy in the enjoyment of himself. He also observed that the nature of life obtained in a future state made marriage altogether superfluous, because, in the world to come, men being spiritual and immortal, like the angels, there was no need of natural means to propagate or continue the kind. "Ye do err," said the blessed Jesus, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage." (Matt. xxii. 29.) "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." (Luke xx. 36.) Hence we may observe that good men are called the children of the Most High from their inheritance at the resurrection, and particularly on account of their being adorned with immortality.

Having thus shown their folly and unbelief, he proceeded to show that they were also ignorant of the Scriptures, and particularly of the writings of Moses, from whence they had drawn their objection, by demonstrating from the very law itself the certainty of the resurrection, at least that of just men, and consequently demolishing the opinion of the Sadducees, who, believing in the materiality of the soul, affirmed that men were annihilated at their death, and that their opinion was founded on the writings of Moses. "Now," said our Saviour, "that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." (Luke xx. 37, 38.) As if he had said, The Almighty cannot properly be called God unless he has his people, and be Lord of the living. Since, therefore, Moses called him the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, long after these venerable patriarchs were dead, the relation denoted by the word God still subsisted between them; consequently they were not annihilated, as you pretend, but still in being, and continue to be the servants of the Most High. This argument effectually silenced the Sadducees, and agreeably surprised the people to see the objection hitherto thought impregnable totally abolished, and the sect they had long abominated fully confuted. "And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine." (Matt. xxii 33.)

Nor could even the Pharisees refrain from giving the Saviour of mankind the praise due to his superlative wisdom; for one of the scribes desired him to give his opinion on a question often debated among their teachers; namely, which was the great commandment of the law? The true reason for their proposing this

question was to try whether he was as well acquainted with the sacred law, and the debates that had arisen on different parts of it, as he was in deriving arguments from the inspired writers to destroy the tenets of those who denied a future state.

In order to understand the question proposed to our blessed Saviour by the scribe, it is necessary to observe that some of the most learned rabbins had declared that the law of sacrifices was the great commandment; some that it was the law of circumcision; and others that the law of meats and washings best

An Eastern Scribe.

merited that title. Our blessed Saviour, however, showed that they were all mistaken, and that the great commandment of the law is the duty of piety, particularly mentioning that comprehensive summary of it given by Moses: "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." (Mark xii. 29, 30.)

The first and chief commandment

is to give God our hearts. The Divine Being is so transcendently amiable in himself, and hath, by the innumerable benefits conferred upon us, such a title to our utmost affection, that no obligation bears any proportion to that of loving him. The honour assigned to this precept proves that piety is the noblest act of the human mind, and that the chief ingredient in piety is love, founded on a clear and extensive view of the Divine perfections, a permanent sense of his benefits, and a deep conviction of his being the sovereign good, our portion, and our happiness. But it is essential to love that there be a delight in contemplating the beauty of the object beloved, whether that beauty be matter of sensation or reflection; that we frequently and with pleasure reflect on the benefits conferred on us by the object of our affections; that we have a strong desire of pleasing him, great fear of doing anything to offend him, and a sensible joy in thinking we are beloved in return. Hence the duties of devotion, prayer, and praise are the most natural and genuine exercises of the love of God. Nor is this virtue so much any single affection as the continual bent of all the affections and powers of the soul; consequently, to love God is as much as possible to direct the whole soul towards him, and to exercise all its faculties on him as its chief object.

Accordingly, the love of God is described in Scripture by the several operations of the mind—a following hard after God, namely, by intense contemplation; a sense of his perfections, gratitude for his benefits, trust in his goodness, attachment to his service, resignation to his Providence, the obeying his commandments, admiration, hope, fear, joy, &c.; not because it consists in any of these singly, but in them altogether; for to content ourselves with partial regards to the Supreme Being is not to be affected towards him in the manner we ought to be, and which his perfections claim.

Hence the words of the precept are, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" that is, with the joint force of all thy faculties; and therefore no idol whatsoever must partake of the love and worship that are due to him. But the beauty and excellency of this state of mind are best seen in their effects; for the worship and obedience flowing from such an universal bent of the soul towards God are as much superior to the worship and obedience arising from partial considerations as the brightness of the sun is to any picture that can be drawn of that luminary.

For example, if we look upon God only as a stern lawgiver, who can and will punish our rebellion, it may, indeed, force an awe and dread of him, and as much obedience to his laws as we think will satisfy him, but can never produce that constancy in our duty, that delight in it, and that earnestness to perform it in its utmost

extent, which are produced and maintained in the mind by the sacred fire of Divine love, or by the bent of the whole soul turned toward God as a reconciled Father—a frame the most excellent that can be conceived, and the most to be desired, because it constitutes the highest perfection and real happiness of the creature.

Again, this commandment requires us to fear God, and certainly we cannot love the Lord our God unless we fear and reverence him; for as the love, so the fear of God is the sum of all the commandments, and indeed the substance of all religion. Prayers and praises are the tribute and homage of religion: by the one we acknowledge our dependence upon God; by the other we confess that all our blessings and comforts are from him. Such, therefore, as neither pray to God nor praise him cannot be said to have a God, for they acknowledge none, but are gods to themselves; and as the love and fear of God are often used in Scripture for his whole worship and service, so is this invocation of his name: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that have not called upon thy name;" that is, those who do not worship or serve him.

But to return. Our blessed Saviour, having thus answered the question put to him by the scribe, added that the second commandment was that which enjoined the love of our neighbour. This had, indeed, no relation to the lawyer's question concerning the first commandment; yet our blessed Lord thought proper to show him which was the second, probably because the men of his sect did not acknowledge the importance and precedency of love to their neighbours, or because they were remarkably deficient in the practice of it, as Jesus himself had often found in their attempt to kill him. "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

This principle of love to God will be also fruitful of every good work. It will make us readily perform the duties of all relations in which we stand. And because love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore it is the fulfilling of the law, for it will prompt us to a cheerful and ready performance of every office, whether of justice or charity, that we owe to our neighbour. All the best things we can do, if destitute of this principle, will appear to be either the effect of hypocrisy, or done to procure the esteem of men. Without love, a narrowness of soul will shut us up within ourselves, and make all we do to others only as a sort of merchandise, trading for our own advantage. It is love only that opens our hearts to consider other persons, and to love them on their own account, or rather on account of God, who is love.

Those who possess such a temper of mind have a constant calm within, and are not disturbed with passion, jealousy, envy, or ill-nature. They observe and rejoice in the happiness

of others; they are glad to see them easy, and share with them in their joy and felicity, not fretting or complaining, though they enjoy less than their neighbours.

It is true love has a very different effect, for the same temper will render many so considerate of the misfortunes of others as to sympathise with them in their distress, and be greatly affected with such objects of compassion as it is not in their power to assist. But there is a real pleasure even in this compassion, as it melts us to the greatest tenderness, and proves us to be men and Christians. The good man, by the overflowings of his love, is sure that he is a favourite with his Maker, because he loves his neighbour. His soul dwells at ease; there is sweetness in all his thoughts and wishes: this makes him clear in his views of every kind, and renders him grateful to all around him.

This charitable temper also maintains in him a constant disposition for prayer. A charitable man who has had occasion to forbear and forgive others, and to return good for evil, dares, with an humble assurance, to lay claim to mercy and pardon through the merits of his blessed Redeemer.

But we return to the scribe, who was astonished at the justness of our Saviour's decisions, and answered that he had determined rightly, since there is but one Supreme God, whom we must all adore; and if we love him above all temporal things, and our neighbour as ourselves, we worship him more acceptably than if we sacrifice to him all the cattle upon a thousand hills.

Our blessed Lord highly applauded the piety and wisdom of this reflection by declaring that the person who made it was not far from the kingdom of God.

As the Pharisees, during the course of our Saviour's ministry, had proposed to him many difficult questions with an intention to prove his prophetical gifts, he now, in his turn, thought proper to make a trial of their skill in the sacred writings. For this purpose he asked their opinion of a difficulty concerning the Messiah's pedigree. "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David." (Matt. xxii. 42.) I know, answered Jesus, you say, Christ is the Son of David; but how can you support your opinion, or render it consistent with the words of David, who himself calls him Lord? and how is he his son? It seems that the Jewish doctors did not imagine that their Messiah would be endued with any perfections greater than those that might be enjoyed by human nature; for though they called him the Son of God, they had no notion that he was God, and therefore could not pretend to solve the difficulty.

The latter question, however, might have convinced them of their error; for if the Messiah was only to be a secular prince, as they supposed, and

to rule over the men of his own time, he never could have been called Lord by persons who died before he was born; far less would so mighty a prince as David, who was also his progenitor, have conferred on him that title. Since, therefore, he rules over the dead of former ages, even over the kings from whom he was himself descended, and his kingdom comprehends the men of all countries and times, past, present, and to come, the doctors, if they had thought accurately upon the subject, would have expected in their Messiah a king different from all other kings. Besides, he is to sit at God's right hand "till all his enemies are made his footstool." Numbers of Christ's enemies are subject to him in this life; and they who will not bow to him willingly shall, like the rebellious subjects of other kingdoms, be reduced by punishment.

Such pertinent replies and solid reasoning gave the people a high opinion of his wisdom, and showed them how far superior he was to their most renowned rabbins, whose arguments to prove their opinions, and answers to the objections which were raised against him, were, in general, very weak and trifling. Nay, his foes themselves, from the repeated proofs they had received of the prodigious depth of his understanding, were impressed with such an opinion of his wisdom that they judged it impossible to entangle him in his talk. Accordingly, they left off attempting it, and from that day forth troubled him no more with their insidious questions.

But having mentioned the final conquest and destruction of his enemies, who were to be made his footstool, agreeably to the prediction of the royal Psalmist, he turned towards his disciples, and, in the hearing of the multitude, solemnly cautioned them to beware of the scribes and Pharisees, insinuating thereby who the enemies were whose destruction he had mentioned. "The scribes and the Pharisees," said he, "sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.)

While they teach the doctrines, before delivered by Moses, observe all they say, but by no means imitate their practices, for they impose many precepts on their disciples which they never perform themselves. "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men." (Matt. xxiii. 4, &c.)

The difficult precepts they impose on others are never regarded by these hypocrites, and any good action they may happen to perform is vitiated by the principle from whence it proceeds. They do it only with a view to popular applause, and not from a regard to God, far less from a love of goodness. They are proud and arro-

gant to excess, as is plain from their affected gravity in their clothes, from the anxiety they discover lest they should not obtain the principal seats in the public assemblies, and from their affecting to be saluted in the streets with the sounding titles of rabbi and father. "They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." (Matt. xxiii. 5—7.)

The word rabbi signifies, properly, "great," and was given to those men who had rendered themselves remarkable for the extent of their learning: it is therefore no wonder that the proud and supercilious Pharisees were fond of a title which so highly complimented their understandings, and gave them great authority with their disciples.

But the followers of the blessed Jesus were to decline this title, because the thing signified by it belonged solely to their Master, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and because they owed no part of their knowledge to themselves, but derived it entirely from him who came down from heaven. "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." (Matt. xxiii. 8, 9.) Life, with all its blessings, comes from God, and men wholly depend upon him. All praise and thankfulness, therefore, should ultimately be referred to him; so that if any one teacheth rightly, not the teacher, but the wisdom of the Almighty, is to be praised, which exerts and communicates itself by him.

Nor were the disciples of our blessed Saviour to accept of the title of Master, or leader, which the Jewish doctors also courted, because, in point of commission and inspiration, they were all equal; neither had they any title to rule the consciences of men, except by virtue of the inspiration which they had received from their Master, to whom alone the prerogative of infallibility belonged. "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ."

The Divine Teacher, however, did not intend by this to insinuate that it was sinful to call men by the stations they held in the world; he only intended to reprove the simplicity of the common people, who loaded their teachers with praises, and forgot to ascribe anything to God, and to root out of the minds of his apostles the pharisaical vanity which decked itself with honour belonging solely to the Creator of the universe. Accordingly, that he might instil into their hearts humility to dispose them to do good offices to one another as occasion offered, he assured them that it was the only road to true greatness; for,

by assuming what did not properly belong to them, they should be despised both by God and men, whereas they who did not disdain to perform the meanest offices of love to their brethren should enjoy a high degree of the Divine favour.

The above discourses greatly insensed the scribes and Pharisees, as they were pronounced in the hearing of many of that order; it is therefore no wonder that they watched every opportunity to destroy him. But this was not a time to put their bloody designs into execution: the people set too high a value on his doctrine to suffer any violence to be offered to his person, and as this was the last sermon he was ever to preach in public, it was necessary he should use some severity, as all his mild persuasions had proved ineffectual. He therefore denounced, in the most solemn manner, dreadful woes against them, not on account of the personal injuries he had received from them, but on account of their excessive wickedness.

They were public teachers of religion, and therefore should have used every method in their power to recommend its precepts to the people, and to have been themselves shining examples of every duty it enjoined; but, on the contrary, they abused every mark and character of goodness for all the purposes of villainy, and, under the cloak of a severe and sanctified aspect, they were malicious, implacable, lewd, covetous, and rapacious. In a word, instead of being reformers, they were the corrupters of mankind, and consequently their wickedness deserved the greatest reproof that could be given by the great Redeemer of mankind. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." (Matt. xxiii. 13, &c.)

The punishment you shall suffer will be terribly severe, because you have given a wrong interpretation of the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah, and done all that is in your power to hinder the people from repenting of their sins and believing the gospel; because you have committed the grossest iniquities, and, under the cloak of religion, have devoured the substance of widows and orphans, hoping to hide your villainies by long prayers; because ye have expressed the greatest zeal imaginable in making proselytes, not with a view to render the Gentiles more wise and virtuous, but to acquire their riches, and a command over their consciences; and, instead of teaching them the precepts of virtue and the

moral duties of religion, you confine their duties to superstitious and ceremonial institutions, and hence they often relapse into their old state of heathenism, and become more wicked than before their conversion, and consequently liable to a more severe sentence.

He also exposed their doctrine concerning oaths, and declared, in opposition to their abominable tenets, that every oath, if the matter of it be lawful, is obligatory, because, when men swear by any part of the creation, it is an appeal to the Creator himself; for in any other light an oath of this kind is absolutely ridiculous, the object having neither knowledge of the fact nor power to punish the perjury. "Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon." (Matt. xxiii. 16—22.)

He likewise reprehended their superstitious practices in observing the minutest parts of the ceremonial precepts of the law, and at the same time utterly neglecting the eternal and indispensable rules of righteousness. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matt. xxiii. 23.)

Their hypocrisy did not escape the censure of the Son of God: they spared no pains to appear virtuous in the eyes of the world, and maintain an external conduct that should acquire the praises of men, but at the same time neglected to adorn their souls with the robe of righteousness, which is the only ornament that can render them dear in the sight of their Maker. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." (Matt. xxiii. 25, 26.) Cleanse first the mind, thy inward man, from evil dispositions and affections, and the outward behaviour will of course be virtuous and praiseworthy.

Moreover, he animadverted upon the success of their hypocrisy. They deceived the simple and unthinking part of mankind with their pretended

sanctity, appearing like whited sepulchres, beautiful on the outside, while their internal parts were full of uncleanness. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful

outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matt. xxiii. 27, 28.)

He also reproved the pains they had taken in adorning the sepulchres of the prophets, because they pretended a great veneration for their memory, and even condemned their fathers who killed them, saying that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would have opposed such monstrous wickedness, while, at the same time, all their actions abundantly proved that they still cherished the same spirit they condemned in their fathers, persecuting the messengers of the Most High, particularly his only-begotten Son, whom they were determined to destroy. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets." (Matt. xxiii. 29—31.)

He added that the Divine Being was desirous of trying every method for their conversion, though all those instances of mercy were slighted, and therefore they must expect such terrible vengeance as should be a standing monument of the Divine displeasure against all the murders committed by the sons of men from the foundation of the world.

Having thus laid before them their heinous guilt and dreadful punishment, he was, at the thought of the calamities which were soon to fall upon them, exceedingly moved, and his breast filled with sensations of

pity to such a degree that, unable to contain himself, he brake forth into tears, bewailing the hard lot of the city of Jerusalem; for, as its inhabitants had more deeply imbrued their hands in the blood of the prophets, they were to drink more deeply of the punishment due to such crimes. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.)

This benevolent as well as pathetic exclamation of our blessed Lord cannot fail to excite in the pious mind the warmest emotions of love to the gracious Saviour of mankind, as well as pity for that once chosen but since degenerate race. How often

had the Almighty called upon them to return from their evil way before he sent his only-begotten Son into the world! How often, how emphatically did the compassionate Jesus entreat them to embrace the merciful terms now offered them by the Almighty; and with what unconquerable obstinacy did they refuse the benevolent offers, and resist the most winning expressions of the Divine love! By the word "house" our blessed Saviour meant the temple, which was from that time to be left unto them desolate: the glory of the Lord, which Haggai had prophesied should fill the second house, was now departing from it; adding, "I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." As if he had said, As ye have killed the prophets, and stoned me, whom the Father hath sent from the courts of heaven, and will shortly put me, who am the Lord of the

temple, to death, your holy house shall be left desolate, and your nation totally deserted by me; nor shall you see me any more till ye shall acknowledge the dignity of my character and the importance of my mission, and say with the whole earth, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Thus did the blessed Jesus strip the scribes and Pharisees of their hypocritical mask. He treated them with severity, because their crimes were of the blackest dye; and hence we should learn to be really good, and not flatter ourselves that we can cover our crimes with the cloak of hypocrisy from that piercing eye from which nothing is concealed.

The people could not fail being astonished at these discourses, as they had always considered their teachers as the most righteous amongst the sons of men. Nay, the persons themselves against whom they were levelled were confounded, because their own consciences convinced them of the truth of every particular laid to their charge. They therefore knew not what course to pursue; and, in the midst of their hesitation, they let Jesus depart without making any attempt to seize him, or inflict on him any kind of punishment.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Our Saviour commends even the smallest act proceeding from a truly benevolent motive. Predicts the demolition of the Temple at Jerusalem, and delivers several instructive parables.

JESUS, the infallible preacher of righteousness, having thus exposed the secret practices of the scribes and Pharisees, repaired with his disciples into the court of the women, called the treasury, from several chests being fixed to the pillars of the portico surrounding the court, for receiving the offerings of those who came to worship in the temple. While he continued in this court he "beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (Mark xii. 41—44.)

Though the offering given by this poor widow was in itself very small, yet, in proportion to the goods of fortune she enjoyed, it was remarkably large; for it was all she had, even all her living. In order, therefore, to encourage charity, and show that it is the disposition of the mind, not the magnificence of the offering, that attracted the regard of the Almighty, the Son of God applauded this poor widow, as having given more in proportion than any of the rich. Their offerings, though great in respect of hers, were but a small part of their estates, whereas her offering was her whole stock. And from this passage of the gospel we should learn that the poor, who in appearance are denied the means of doing charitable offices, are encouraged to do all they can; for how small soever the gift may be, the Almighty, who beholds the heart, values it, not according to

what it is in itself, but according to the disposition with which it is given.

On the other hand, we should learn from hence that it is not enough for the rich that they exceed the poor in the gifts of charity; they should bestow in proportion to their fortune; and they would do well to remember that a little given where a little only is left appears a more noble offering in the sight of the Almighty, and discovers a more benevolent and humane temper of mind, than sums vastly large bestowed out of a plentiful abundance.

The disciples now remembered that their Master, at the conclusion of his pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem, had declared that the temple should not any more be favoured with his

Roman Soldier firing the Temple.

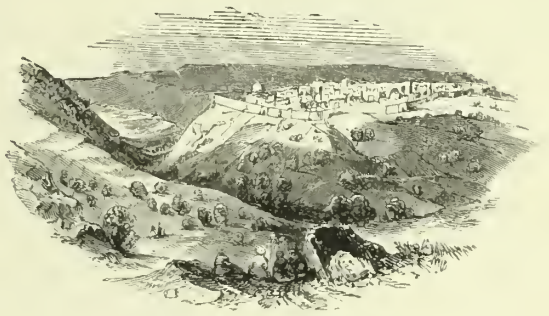
presence till they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

A resolution of this kind could not fail of greatly surprising his disciples; and therefore, as he was departing from that sacred structure, they desired him to observe the beauty of the building, insinuating that they thought it strange he should intimate an intention of leaving it desolate; that so glorious a fabric, celebrated in every corner of the earth, was not to be deserted rashly; and that they should think themselves supremely happy when he, as the Messiah and descendant of David, should take possession of it, and

erect his throne in the midst of Jerusalem. And as they went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

The eastern wall of the temple, which fronted the Mount of Olives, whither the disciples, with their Master, were then retiring, was built from the bottom of the valley to a prodigious height with stones of an incredible bulk, firmly compacted together, and therefore made a very grand appearance at a distance. The eastern wall is supposed to have been the only remains of Solomon's temple, and had escaped when the Chaldeans burnt it. But this building, however costly or strong it appeared, our Saviour told them, should be totally destroyed. "Seest thou," said he, "these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." (Mark xiii. 2.)

That noble edifice, raised with much labour and at vast expense, shall be razed to the very foundation. The disciples, therefore, when they heard their Master affirm that not so much as one of these enormous stones, which had mocked the fury of Nebuchadnezzar's army, and survived the destructive hand of time, was to be left one upon another, they perceived that the whole temple was to be demolished, but did not suspect that the sacrifices were to be taken away, and a new religion introduced, which rendered the temple unnecessary. They therefore flattered themselves that the fabric then standing, however glorious it might appear, was too small for the numerous worshippers who would frequent it when all the nations of the world were subject to the Messiah's kingdom, and was therefore to be pulled down in order to be erected on a more magnificent plan, suitable to the idea they had conceived of his future empire. Filled with these pleasing imaginations, they received the news with pleasure, meditating, as they walked to the mountain, on the glorious



View of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.

things which were shortly to come to pass.

When they arrived on the Mount of Olives, and their Master had taken his seat on some eminence, from whence they had a prospect of the temple and part of the city, his disciples drew near to know when the demolition of the old structure was to happen, and what were to be the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world. "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of

thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. xxiv. 3.)

The disciples, by this request, seemed desirous of knowing what signs should precede the erection of that extensive empire over which they supposed the Messiah was to reign, for they still expected he would govern a secular kingdom. They therefore connected the demolition of the temple with their Master's coming, though they had not the least notion that he was to destroy the nation, and change the form of religious worship.

They therefore meant by "the end of the world," or, as the words should have been translated, "the end of the age," the period of the political government then executed by heathen procurators, and considered their Master's coming to destroy the constitution then subsisting as a very desirable event. They also thought the demolition of the temple proper, as they expected a larger and more superb building, proportioned to the number of the Messiah's subjects, would be erected in its stead.

That this is the real sense of the disciples' question will sufficiently appear if we consider that they were delighted with the prospect; whereas, if they had meant by the end of the world the final period of all things, the destruction of the temple would have exhibited to them, in their present temper of mind, a melancholy prospect which they could not have beheld without a deep concern.

Our blessed Saviour, therefore, was careful to convince them of their mistake by telling them that he was not come to rule a secular empire, as they supposed, but to punish the Jews for their perfidy and rebellion by destroying both their temple and nation. "Take heed," said he, "that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

This caution was far from being unnecessary, because, though the disciples were to see their Master ascend into heaven, they might take occasion from the prophecy to think that he would appear again on earth, and therefore be in danger of seduction by the false Christs that should arise. "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." Before this nation and temple are destroyed, terrible wars will happen in the land: "for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." (Matt. xxiv. 6, 7.)

These are the preludes of the important event, forerunners of the evils which shall befall this nation and people. At the same time, you shall meet with hot persecutions; walk, therefore, circumspectly, and arm yourselves both with patience and fortitude, that ye may be able to perform your duty through the whole course of these persecutions, for you shall be brought before the great

men of the earth for my sake. "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." (Mark xiii. 11.)

During this time of trouble and confusion, he told them, the perfidy of mankind should be so great towards one another, that "brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death." The unbelieving Jews and apostate Christians shall commit the

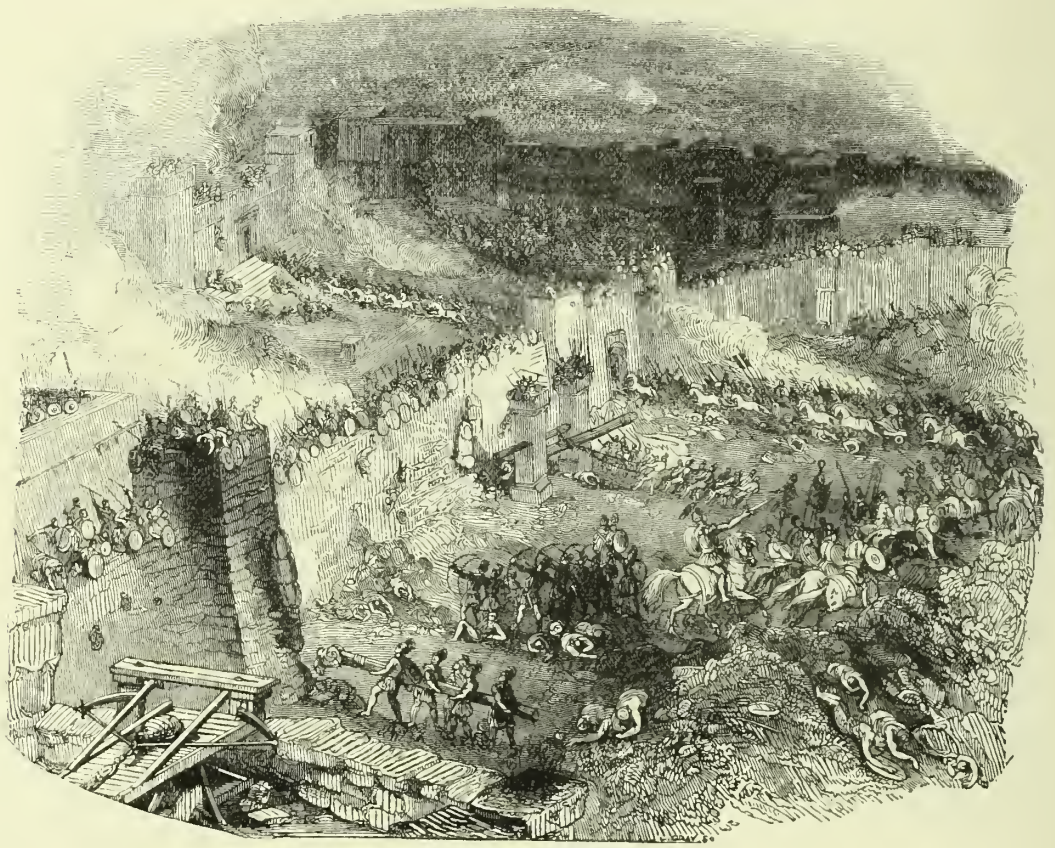
Atrocities during the Siege of Jerusalem.

most enormous and inhuman crimes. It is, therefore, no wonder that the perfidy and wickedness of such pretended Christians should discourage many disciples, and greatly hinder the propagation of the gospel. But he who supports his faith during these persecutions, and is not led astray by the seduction of false Christians, shall escape that terrible destruction which, like a deluge, will overflow the land.

And when Jerusalem shall be surrounded with armies, Pagan armies, bearing in their standards the images of their gods, the "abomination of desolation" mentioned by the prophet Daniel, then let him who readeth the predictions of that prophet understand that the end of the city

and sanctuary, together with the ceasing of the sacrifice and oblation there predicted, is come, and consequently the final period of the Jewish polity.

"Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out." (Luke xxi. 21.) "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." (Matt. xxiv. 17, 18.) Then shall be fulfilled the awful predictions of the prophet Daniel, and the dreadful judgments denounced against the impenitent and unbelieving.



Jerusalem besieged.

In those days of vengeance the women who are with child, and they who have infants hanging at their breasts, shall be particularly unhappy, because they cannot flee from the impending destruction. "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter," when the badness of the roads and the rigour of the season will render speedy travelling very troublesome, if not impossible; "neither on the Sabbath day," when you shall think it unlawful. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. xxiv. 21.) This is confirmed by what Josephus tells us, that no less than

eleven hundred thousand perished in the siege.

The heavenly prophet added that, except the days of tribulation should be shortened, none of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, of whom he is speaking, should escape destruction; in confirmation of which Josephus tells us that the quarrels which raged during the siege were so fierce and obstinate, that both within the walls of Jerusalem and without, in the neighbouring country, the whole land was one continued scene of horror and desolation; and had the siege continued much longer, the whole nation of the Jews had been totally destroyed, according to our Lord's prediction. "But," added our blessed Saviour, "for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." By the elect are meant such of the Jews as had embraced the doctrines of the gospel, and particularly those who were brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles.

As it is natural in time of trouble to look with eager expectation for a deliverer, our blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples not to listen to any pretences of that kind, as many false Christs would arise and deceive great numbers of the people—a prediction that was fully accomplished during the terrible siege of Jerusalem by the Romans: so Josephus tells us that many arose pretending to be the Messiah, boasting that they would deliver the nation from all its enemies. And the multitude, always too prone to listen to deceivers who promise temporal advantages, gave credit to those deceivers, became more obstinate in their opposition to the Romans, and thereby rendered their destruction more severe and more inevitable.

And what still increased the infatuation of the people was their performing wonderful things during the war; and accordingly Josephus calls them magicians and sorcerers. Hence

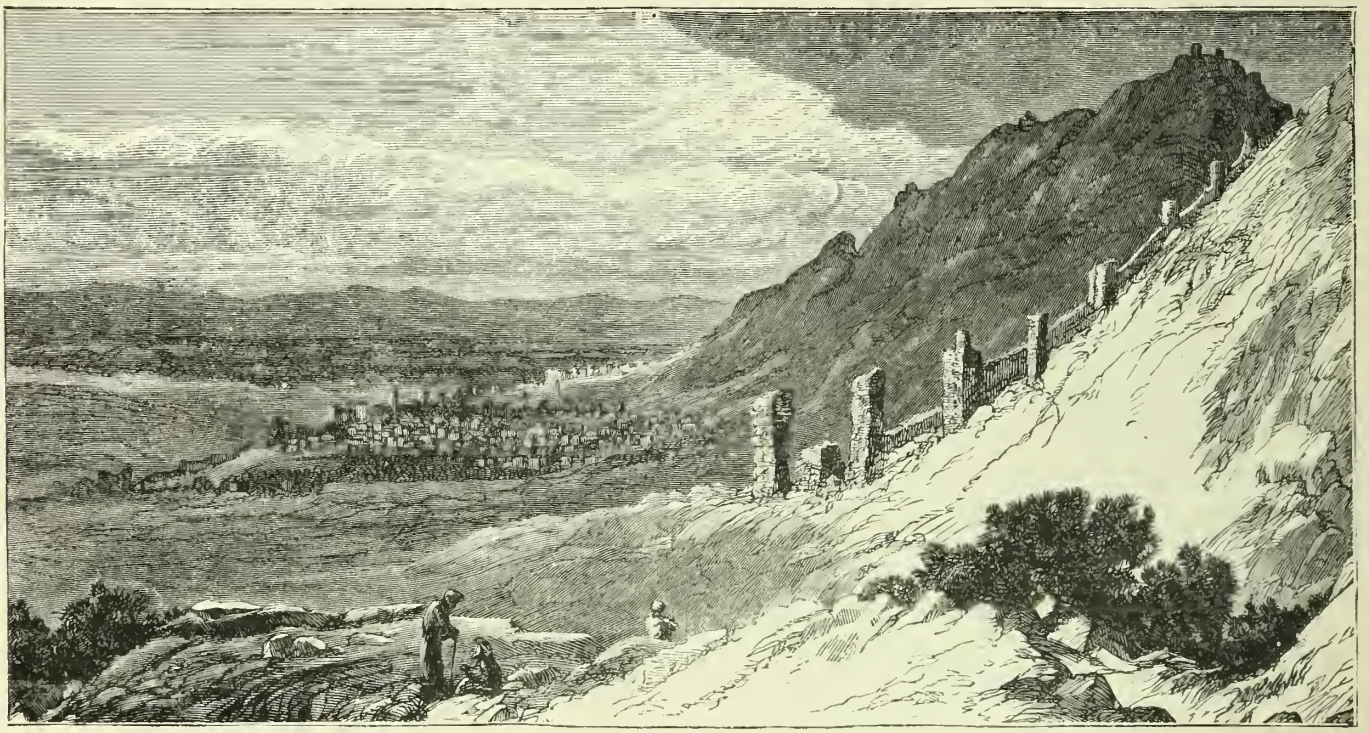
Roman Soldiers.

we see the propriety of the caution given by the Son of God, who foretold that they should "show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things."

And as the partisans of the false Christs might pretend that the Messiah was concealed awhile for fear of the Romans, and the weaker sort of

Christians, without this warning, have imagined that Christ was actually returned to deliver the nation in its extremity, and to punish their enemies, who now so cruelly oppressed them, and that he would show himself as soon as it was proper, the blessed Jesus cautioned them against this particular. "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matt. xxiv. 26, &c.)

The coming of the Son of Man shall be like lightning, swift and destructive. But he will not come



Antioch.

personally; his servants only shall come, the Roman armies, who, by his command, shall destroy this nation as eagles devour their prey.

Having thus given them a particular account of the various circumstances which should precede the destruction of Jerusalem, he next described that catastrophe itself in all the pomp of language and imagery made use of by the ancient prophets when they foretold the destruction of cities and kingdoms. "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken." (Mark xiii. 24, 25.) "And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the

earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke xxi. 25, 26.)

By these lofty and figurative expressions, the decaying of all the glory, excellency, and prosperity of the nation, and the introduction of universal sadness, misery, and confusion are beautifully described. The roaring of the sea and the waves may justly be considered as metaphorical, as the signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars are plainly so; and by the powers of heaven are meant the whole Jewish polity, government, laws, and religion, which were the work of Heaven: these our Lord tells us should be shaken, or rather, utterly dissolved.

As the disciples had, in conformity to the repeated questions of the Pharisees during his ministry, asked what would be the sign of his coming, our blessed Saviour told them that after the tribulation of those days, when the sun should be darkened and all the enemies of the Messiah should mourn, they should see the accomplishment of what Daniel foretold by the figurative expression of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven; for they should behold the signal punishment executed on the Jewish nation by the Roman armies, sent for that purpose by the decree and permission of Heaven. "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. xxiv. 30.)

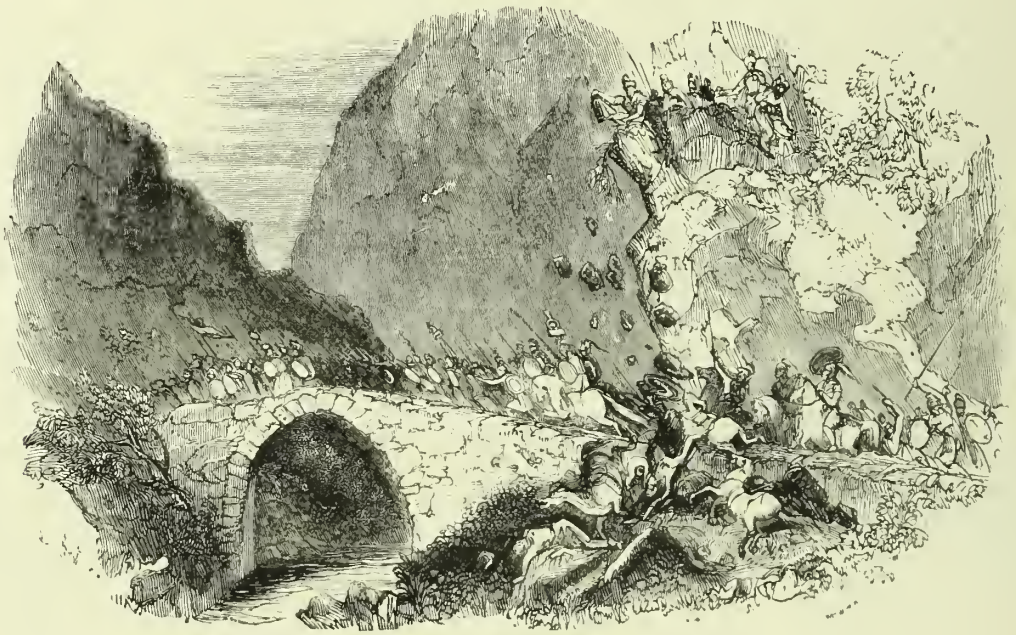
Then were the followers of Christ to be delivered from the oppression under which they had long groaned, and openly honoured before the whole earth; and on this may true believers rest, because it is founded on eternal truth. "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. xxiv. 34, 35.)

Whoever shall compare the prediction of our Saviour with the history Josephus wrote of the war cannot fail of being struck with the wisdom of Christ, acknowledging that his prediction was truly Divine; for, as the Jewish nation was at this time in the most flourishing state, the event here foretold was altogether improbable. Besides, the circumstances of the destruction are very numerous and surprisingly great, and the whole delivered without any ambiguity. It is therefore a prophecy of such a kind as could never have been uttered by any impostor, and consequently the person who delivered it was acquainted with the secret counsels of Heaven, and truly Divine.

Many cavillers against the Christian scheme have asked why Christ should order his disciples not to flee from Jerusalem till they saw it encompassed with the Roman army, when it would then be impossible for them to make their escape. But

persons, before they propose such questions, would do well to read attentively the history Josephus has given us of these terrible calamities, because they would there find a solution to the difficulty. That historian tells us that Cestius Gallus surrounded the city with his army, and, at a time when he could easily have taken the city, suddenly withdrew his forces without any apparent reason. He adds that, as soon as the siege was raised, many eminent Jews fled from it, as from a sinking ship. In all probability many of these were Christians, who, being warned by this prophecy of their great Master, saved themselves by flight, as he had directed. Thus we see what frivolous objections are made by the free-thinkers of our age against the truth of the sacred writings, and how easily they are answered.

Having thus beautifully but aw-



Flight from Jerusalem.

fully described this important and striking event, the blessed Jesus assured his disciples that it would be very unexpected, and thence urged the necessity of a watchful vigilance, lest they should be surprised, and have a share in those calamities. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matt. xxiv. 37.) "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." (Mark xiii. 35, 36.)

It was natural, as men were to undergo, at the destruction of Jerusalem, nearly the same miseries, and as the passions which its approach

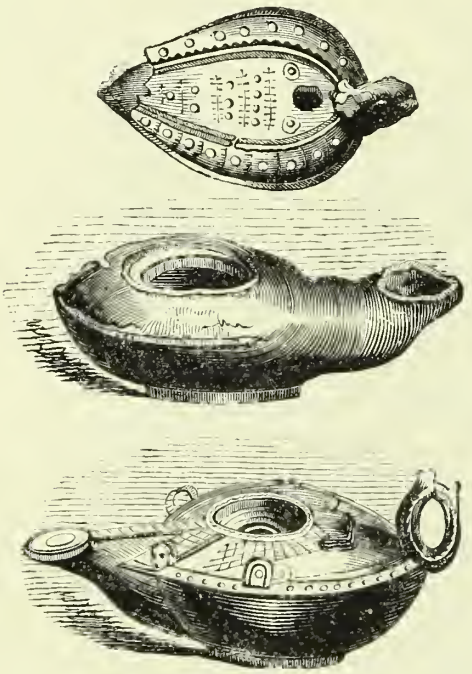
would raise in their minds were similar to those which will happen at the destruction of the world and the general judgment; it was natural, I say, for our blessed Saviour on this occasion to put his disciples in mind of that judgment, and to exhort them to the faithful discharge of their duty, from the consideration of the suddenness of his coming to call every individual to account after death. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods." (Matt. xxiv. 44, &c.) As if he had said, You who are the ministers of religion ought to be particularly careful to discharge the important trust committed to your care. You are the stewards to whose care the whole household of the church is committed; and you would do well to remember that your example will have a great effect upon the minds of those employed under you. It is your duty to be well acquainted with the stores of evangelical truth, and to understand how they may be applied to the best advantage: you should be also careful to know the characters of the different persons under your direction, that you may be able to give every one of them his portion of meat in due season; and if I find you thus employed at my coming, I will reward you with the joys of my kingdom, even as an earthly master bestows particular marks of respect on such servants as have been remarkably faithful in any important trust.

But, on the other hand, if you are not true to the trust reposed in you; if you pervert your office, and watch not over the souls committed to your care, I will come unto you unexpectedly, and make you dreadful examples of mine anger by the severe punishments which I will inflict upon you. "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. xxiv. 48, &c.)

Having thus generally described the future state of retribution, our Lord passed to the consideration of the general judgment, when those rewards and punishments should be distributed in their utmost extent. This could not fail of animating his disciples to a vigorous discharge of their duty; and the striking representation of the last judgment he has here given must greatly tend to rouse the consciences of men from their

lethargy to a consideration, before it be too late, of the things which belong to their peace.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven," the gospel kingdom, in the last dispensation of it, when the kingdom of grace is going to be swallowed up in the kingdom of glory, "be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were



Eastern Lamps.

wise, and five were foolish." They that were foolish took, indeed, their lamps, but put no oil in their vessels, while the wise, as an instance of their prudence and foresight, took both their lamps and oil in their vessels, knowing that it was uncertain when the bridegroom would arrive, and that they might, in all probability, wait long for his coming. Nor were they mistaken, for the bridegroom did not come so soon as they expected. And while he tarried "they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." But he from within answered and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." (Matt. xxv. 5—13.)

In order to understand this parable we must remember that it alludes to the marriage customs among the Eastern people. It was usual with them for the bridegroom to bring his bride home in the evening, sooner or later, as circumstances might happen; and that they might be received properly at his house, his female acquaintance, especially those of the younger sort, were invited to come and wait with lamps till some of his retinue, dispatched before the rest, informed them that he was near at hand, upon which

they trimmed their lamps, went forth to welcome him, and conducted him with his bride into the house, for which they were honoured as guests at the marriage feast, and shared in the usual festivities.

To ten such virgins our blessed Saviour compares all those to whom the gospel is preached, because this was the general number appointed to wait on the bridegroom; and to these all Christian professors may be likened, who, taking their lamps of Christian profession, go forth to meet the bridegroom; that is, prepare themselves as candidates for the kingdom of heaven, and desire to be admitted with Christ, the celestial bridegroom, into the happy mansions of immortality.

We must remember that there always was, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad in the church till the great day of separation arrives. The weakness of the foolish is represented by their taking no oil in their vessels with their lamps; that is, the foolish Christians content themselves with the bare lamp of a profession, and never think of furnishing it with the oil of Divine grace, the fruit of which is a life of holiness; whereas the wise, well knowing that a lamp without the supply of oil would be speedily extinguished — that faith, without love and holiness, will be of no consequence—take care to supply themselves with a sufficient quantity of the Divine grace, and to display in their lives the works of love and charity.

While all those virgins, though differently supplied, were waiting the coming of the bridegroom, they all slumbered and slept; that is, all Christians, both good and bad, the sincere and the hypocrite, all lie down together in the sleep of death, and, while the bridegroom delays his coming, slumber in the chambers of the dust.

The Jews have a tradition that Christ's coming to judgment will be at midnight, which agrees with that particular in the parable, "At midnight there was a cry made, Go ye out to meet him." But however this be, whether he will come at midnight or in the morning, it will be awfully sudden and alarming. The great cry will be heard to the ends of the earth. The trumpet shall sound, and the mighty archangel's voice pierce even the bowels of the earth and the depths of the ocean. "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

The graves, both earthly and watery, must surrender their clayey tenants, and all will then begin to think how they may prepare themselves to find admittance to the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." But the foolish soon perceived their folly: their lamps were gone out, totally extinguished, and they had no oil to support the flame: in like manner the hypocrite's hope shall perish. But the wise were in a much happier condition; they had oil in their vessels, sufficient

for themselves, but none to spare; for, when the foolish virgins would have procured some from them, they denied their request, fearing there would not be enough for both.

There are here beautifully represented nominal and sincere Christians; the former having only the bare lamp of a profession, who have not been solicitous to gain the oil of Divine grace by a constant use of the means assigned; those who have been contented with a mere negative righteousness, with such a justice and honesty as heathens boasted of; to whose charge no heinous crimes can be laid, while, at the same time, no good can be spoken of them as the effect of their faith; and such will fare like the foolish virgins; while the latter, whose hearts are stocked with Divine oil, will, like the wise virgins, enter into the joy of their Lord.

But the foolish, going to purchase oil, missed the bridegroom, and behold the door was shut. They at last, however, reached the gate, and with great importunity cried, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." But he answered and said, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." As you denied me on earth, I deny you now; depart from me; I know you not! How justly, therefore, did our blessed Saviour bid us all watch, that we may be found ready whenever he cometh, or commands, by the king of terrors, our attendance before his judgment-seat! Let us not refuse this kind invitation of being constantly prepared to meet the heavenly Bridegroom; let us fill our lamps with oil, that we may be ready to follow our great Master into the happy mansions of the heavenly Canaan.

But, as this duty was of the utmost importance, our blessed Saviour, to show us more clearly the nature and use of Christian watchfulness, to which he exhorts us at the conclusion of the parable of the ten virgins, added another, wherein he represented the different characters of a faithful and slothful servant, and the difference of their future acceptation.

This parable, like the former, is intended to stir us up to a zealous preparation for the coming of our Lord by diligence in the discharge of our duty, and by a careful improvement of our souls in holiness, and at the same time to expose the vain pretences of hypocrites, and to demonstrate that fair speeches and outward forms, without the power of godliness, will be of no service in the last day of account.

The Son of Man, said he, may, with respect to his final coming to judge the world, be likened unto "a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." (Matt. xxv. 14, 15.)

Immediately on his master's de-

parture, he that had received the five talents lost no time, but went and traded with the same, and his increase was equal to his industry and application: he made them other five talents. He that had received two talents did the same, and had equal success. But he that received one, very unlike the conduct of his fellow-servants, went his way, digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money, idle, useless, unemployed, and unimproved.

After a long time, and at an hour when they did not expect it, the lord of those servants returned, called them before him, and ordered them to give an account of their several trusts; upon which he that had received five talents, as a proof of his fidelity, produced other five talents, saying, "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." His lord, highly applauding his industry and fidelity, said to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

In like manner, also, he that had received two talents declared he had gained two others; upon which he was honoured with the same applause, and admitted into the same joy with his fellow-servant; their master having regard to the industry and fidelity of his servants, not to the number of the talents only, but to the greatness of their increase.

After this, he that had received the one talent came, and, with a shameful falsehood to excuse his vile indolence, said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine." (Matt. xxv. 24, 25.)

This perversion of even the smallest portion of grace greatly excited the resentment of his lord, who answered, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. xxv. 26—30.)

Such is the parable of the talents, as delivered by our blessed Saviour; a parable containing the measures of our duty to God, and the motives that enforce it, all delivered in the plainest and simplest manner. But its views are so extensive and affecting, that while it instructs the meanest capacity, it engages reve-

rence and attention from the greatest, and strikes an impression on the most improved understanding. We are to consider God as our Lord and Master, the author and giver of every good gift, and ourselves as his servants or stewards, who, in various instances and measures, have received from his goodness such blessings and abilities as may fit us for the several stations and offices of life to which his providence appoints us. But then we are to observe that these are committed to us as a trust or loan, for whose due management we are accountable to the donor. If we faithfully acquit ourselves of this probationary charge, we shall receive far greater instances of God's confidence and favour; but if we are remiss and negligent, we must expect to feel his resentment and displeasure. A time will come, and how near it may be none of us can tell, when our great Master will demand a particular account of every talent he hath committed to our care.

This time may, indeed, be at a distance, for it is uncertain when the king of terrors will receive the awful warrant to terminate our existence here below; yet it will certainly come, and our eternal happiness or misery depends upon it, so that we should have it continually in our thoughts, and engrave it, as with the point of a diamond, on the tables of our hearts.

We learn from this instructive parable that Infinite Wisdom hath intrusted men with different talents, and adjusted them to the various purposes of human life. But though the gifts of men are unequal, none can with justice complain, since whatever is bestowed, be it more or less, is a favour entirely unmerited. Each, then, should be thankful, and satisfied with his portion; and, instead of envying the more liberal endowments of others, apply himself to the improvement of his own. And it should be attentively observed that the difficulty of the task is in proportion to the number of talents committed to each. He who had received five was to gain other five; and he who had received two was to account for other two. Surely, then, we have no reason to complain if our Master has laid on us a lighter burden, a more easy and less severe service, than he has on others, especially as our interest in the favour of the Almighty does not depend on the number of our talents, but on our diligence and application in the management of them; so that the moral design of this parable is to engage our utmost attention to improve such talents as our heavenly Father has thought proper to bestow upon us.

By these talents are principally meant the communications and graces of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows in different measures, dividing to every man severally as he will. And subordinate to these are all the means, opportunities, and abilities to exercise or improve these

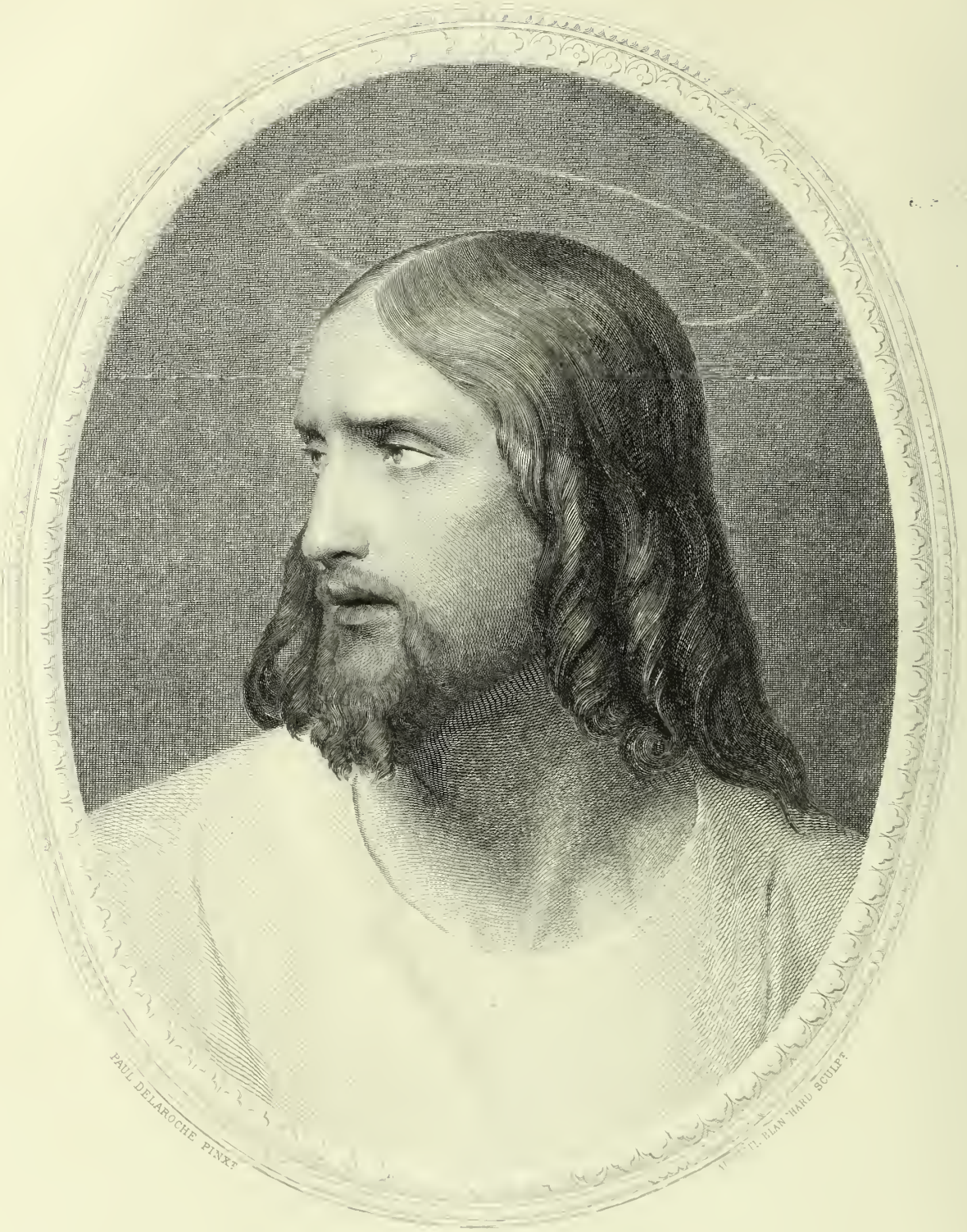
graces; all the advantages of station, fortune, education, and whatever may enable us to do good; for we, having received all we enjoy from God, are strictly obliged to promote the wise ends for which he bestows his favour. And here let us take a short and imperfect view of what God has done for us. He has given us reason and understanding to discern good from evil, and inquire into the causes, relations, and consequences of things, to collect from them proper rules of judgment and action. Indeed, since the fall, this faculty has been much obscured; but still it remains an universal gift of God to men; and though not equal to all, yet it is given to every man in such measure as is sufficient for his direction. In the knowledge of our duty and the pursuit of our happiness God has, by the gospel, so graciously supplied the defect of reason that the weakest understanding may know how to be happy: such assistances of Divine grace attend every Christian, if he will apply to God for them, as may enable him to direct his inclinations, govern his passions, and subdue his corrupt affections. These talents of nature are in some degree common to all men; and, by the improvement of that grace which is conferred on every one, all have sufficient to conduct them through the several stages of life, if they will but use proper diligence and application. But regard must be had to all the means for cultivating those gifts of nature and grace, such as all opportunities of instruction, the ministry and ordinances of religion, the reproofs and example of good men, the occasions offered, and the abilities given, for the exercise of virtue: all these are talents, or gifts of God, deposited with us, to be diligently made use of, and for which we are accountable to him. I shall, therefore, proceed to show what duty is required from us in the improvement of these talents. It is here supposed that these talents are improvable, or otherwise they would be of no use or value; and, indeed, we are bound by the command of God to improve them, who has threatened to inflict several penalties if we neglect it. And if they are not improved, they will not continue long with us, but be lost: the finest parts and capacities, without proper culture, will make but a mean and contemptible figure. No knowledge can be preserved without use and exercise; and the same holds with regard to moral accomplishments. It requires great care and attention to form a virtuous habit, and much more to preserve it in its vigour. Unless we co-operate with the motions of God's grace, and cultivate it by use and application, its impressions will gradually wear out and be lost. "The Spirit of God will not always strive with man." He gives us a stock to manage equal to the service he expects from us; but if we are slothful and negligent, and will not apply it to the purposes for which it was

given, he will recall the useless gift. "Take from him," says he, "the talent, and give to him that hath ten talents." Let us, therefore, diligently improve every talent committed to us, because this will be required of us in the day of account, and, if not improved, will be immediately taken from us. What this improvement implies, and how we may discharge this duty, is an inquiry of the nearest concern to us. The proper improvement of all God's gifts is the employing them so as may best promote his glory.

This is the end the Almighty has proposed in our creation, in all the powers he has endued us with, and in all the aids of grace he has vouchsafed us. Whatever other improvements we make of them will not profit us, nor be admitted as any proof of our fidelity in the day of reckoning. We may cultivate our understanding by learning and study, and extend our knowledge through all the subjects of human inquiry; but if our end be only to gratify our curiosity or our vanity, we are not serving God, but ourselves. We may increase our portion of God's outward gifts; but if we only apply them to enlarge our own conveniences, we are not making the improvements our Master expects. We may take pleasure in our knowledge and fortune, rejoice in them as our portion and instruments of our present satisfaction; but we must still remember that, in our reckoning with God, all these improvements of our capacities and abilities will be added to our account. And the only use God will admit us to set in balance of our debt to him is to employ them as means of increasing and multiplying our virtues, or as instruments of exercising them in the works of piety and religion.

From hence we may infer that there will be degrees of future glory and happiness, proportioned to our eminence in the Divine life, and the service we have done to the cause of Christ.

Dreadful will be his case who has squandered away the stock itself; suffered his gifts to perish for want of use; or, by abusing them to the service of sin, has provoked the Almighty to take them from him. How shall the prodigal recall the fortune he has spent, and appease the anger of his Judge? The terrors of the Lord may justly terrify him, but they should not extinguish his endeavours in despair. He has lost many excellent talents; but he who gave can restore. Indeed, the most circumspect piety will, in the great day of account, want much to be forgiven, and must expect his reward from the mercy of his Judge, not from the merit of his service. Let us, then, do all in our power to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; for though the awful day of the Lord may be at a great distance, yet the time allotted us to prepare for it is limited by the short space of human life. The night of death cometh when no man can work. To-day,



Our Blessed Redeemer

therefore, while it is called to-day, let us be diligent in the work of the Lord, correct our errors, finish what is imperfect, that we may obtain his approbation, and make our calling and election sure.

We shall now return to the third parable delivered at the same time by the blessed Jesus; namely, that of the last judgment. "When the Son of Man," said he, "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." (Matt. xxv. 31—33.) It is common in the Old Testament to compare good men to sheep, on account of their innocence and usefulness, and wicked men to goats, for their exorbitant lusts. Our blessed Saviour, however, does not pursue the allegory further, but describes the remaining, and, indeed, the greatest part of this awful scene in terms perfectly simple; so that, though the sense be profound, it is obvious. Here the judgment of all nations, Gentiles as well as Christians, is exhibited, and the particulars on which these awful trials are to proceed displayed by the great Judge himself.

Here we learn that we shall be condemned or acquitted according as we have neglected or performed works of charity—works which flow from the great principles of faith and piety, and which the very heathens are, by the light of nature, invited to perform. But we must not understand that such works merited this favour from the Judge. No; all who are acquitted at that day, whether Heathens or Christians, shall be acquitted solely on account of the righteousness of Christ, the true, the only meritorious cause.

Good men can at best but consider their present state as a banishment from their native country—a state in which they are often exposed to innumerable temptations, to persecutions, to poverty, to reproach, to contempt. But the consideration that they are travelling towards the heavenly Jerusalem, a city prepared for them when the foundations of the world were laid, will be abundantly sufficient to support their spirits, and render them more than conquerors. The glory laid up for them in the mansions of eternity, and which the great Judge will, at the awful day of account, confer upon them, will animate them to bear the violences of their oppressors, and even defy the malice of men and devils. Nay, they will behold with contempt the flourishing prosperity of the wicked, and look forward to that glorious and immortal crown which will be given them by their great Redeemer. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an

hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." (Matt. xxv. 34—36.)

The enraptured and amazed souls shall then ask, with great reverence and humility, when they performed these services, as they never saw him in want, and therefore could not assist him. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or

"Consider the lilies of the field."

thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. xxv. 37—40.) This is truly astonishing. The united wisdom of men and angels could never have discovered a more proper method to convey an

idea of the warmth and force of the Divine benevolence to the sons of men, or offer a more forcible motive to charity, than that the Son of God himself should, from his seat of judgment, in presence of the whole race of mankind and all the hosts of blessed spirits from the courts of heaven, declare that all good offices done to the afflicted are done to himself. During the time of his dwelling with human nature in this vale of tears he suffered unspeakable injuries and affliction; and therefore he considers all the distressed virtuous as members of his body, loves them with the utmost tenderness, and is so greatly interested in their welfare that he rejoices when they are happy, and grieves when they are distressed.

Perhaps the true reason why the grand inquiry shall rest solely on the performance of duties is, that men, generally speaking, consider the neglect of duties as a matter of no great consequence, but dread the commission of crimes; and hence it happens that while they keep themselves free from the latter, they easily find excuses for the former. And as there is not a more pernicious error with regard to religion and morality than this, the blessed Jesus thought proper to give such an account of the judgment as should prove the most solemn caution against it.

But, as the inquiry turns wholly on the performance of duties, it has been asked why the offices of charity only are mentioned, and no notice taken of the duties of piety, though the Judge himself, upon another occasion, declared these to be of more importance than the duties of charity, so highly applauded in this parable. But those who ask this question would do well to remember that piety and charity cannot subsist separately; piety, and its origin, faith, always producing charity; and charity, wherever it subsists, necessarily presupposing piety.

This connection between piety and charity will evidently appear if it be considered that no man can be truly benevolent and merciful without loving those dispositions. Consequently, he must love benevolence in God; that is, he must love God; for piety, or the love of God, is nothing else but the regard we cherish towards God on account of his perfections.

Piety and charity being thus essentially connected together, it was abundantly sufficient to examine the conduct of men with regard to either of those graces. In the parable the inquiry is represented as turning upon the duties of charity, perhaps because in this branch of goodness there is less room for self-deceit than in the other. It is common for hypocrites, by a pretended zeal in externals of religion, to make specious pretences to extraordinary piety, and at the same time to be totally deficient in charity; to be covetous, unjust, rapacious, and proud, and consequently destitute of all love for their Creator. But none can assume the appearance of charity but by

feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the distressed, and performing other benevolent offices to their brethren.

The works of charity may, indeed, in some particular cases, flow from other principles than those of a pious and benevolent disposition, as from

Charity. (*W. C. T. Dobson, R.A.*)

vanity, or even views of interest; but then it should be remembered that a common degree of hypocrisy will hardly engage men to undertake them: they are by far too weighty duties to be sustained by those false principles, and therefore are seldom counterfeited. Consequently, wher-

ever a genuine, extensive, and permanent charity is found, we may conclude that there the love of God reigns in perfection.

Hence we learn that all pretences to goodness, without a principle of grace wrought in the heart, avail nothing towards our eternal salvation. At the same time, if we consider it in its full light, it will give us no reason to hope well of ourselves if we are wanting in our duty to God, but convince us that we should not only be charitable, but grateful also, as well as just, temperate, and blameless in all our dealings with mankind. For we should remember that the duty we owe to the Almighty is in no respect incompatible with that which is due to our fellow-men, and which it would be unjust in us to neglect. Indeed, it consists in dispositions and actions, the same in kind, but different in degree, proportionate to the perfection of the object.

He who loves and admires holiness, justice, and truth in men, cannot but love these perfections in God; that is, he must love God; so, likewise, he that is truly grateful to an earthly benefactor, cannot be ungrateful to one from whose bounty he receives all the good things he enjoys. And since ingratitude in men is nothing more than forgetting the benefits received and the benefactor who conferred the favour, how can we acquit ourselves from the charge of ingratitude to God if we forget the obligations we lie under to him, and are at no pains to return him thanks; that is, if we wholly neglect the external and internal exercises of true piety and devotion?

Since, therefore, the duty we owe to God is the same in kind with that we owe to man, it will undeniably follow that true morality can never exist where piety is wanting, and that a person pretending to morality who is destitute of piety renders himself ridiculous.

The awful Judge himself has told us that after he has passed the happy sentence on the righteous, he will pronounce the following sentence of condemnation upon the wicked: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matt. xxv. 41—45.)

It is remarkable that our blessed Saviour has told us that the fire of hell was not prepared for the wicked, but for the devil and his angels, and that the kingdom of heaven was prepared for the righteous. Perhaps he

intended to teach us that the original design of Omnipotence was to render man happy, not miserable; a state of consummate felicity was formed for the human race at the time they were created; but the fire of hell was prepared for the devil and his angels immediately after their fall. And as wicked men join with devils in their sin of rebellion against the Almighty, they are doomed to share with them in their punishment—a punishment of the heaviest kind, the punishment of devils.

After having represented the sentences that are to be passed on the righteous and the wicked, our Saviour closed the parable in the following manner: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Happy decision to the followers of the Lamb! awful sentence to the workers of iniquity! May it excite us to pray for that grace by which alone we shall be enabled to escape the awful doom to be pronounced upon the impenitent on that great day when the Almighty Judge shall come in the clouds, with his holy angels, to render righteous judgment to the nations of the earth!

Rachel's Tomb.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Our blessed Lord is anointed by a poor but pious woman. The perfidious Judas consents to betray his Master. The humble Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, and foretells that disciple who was to betray him into the hands of his inveterate enemies.

THE blessed Jesus used frequently to retire in the evening from the city to the Mount of Olives, and there spend the night either in some village or the gardens, in order to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies. They did not, indeed, presume to attack him while he was surrounded by his followers in the daytime; but in all probability, had he lodged within the city, they would have apprehended him during the darkness and silence of the night.

When our blessed Saviour had finished these parables, he added a short account of his own death, in order to fortify the disciples against the greatest trial they had yet met with; namely, the sufferings of their Master. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." (Matt. xxvi. 1—5.)

When the evening approached, our blessed Saviour, with his disciples, repaired to Bethany, and entered the house of Simon the leper, probably one who had experienced the healing efficacy of his power. But while he sat at meat a woman, who had also

doubtless been an object of his mercy, poured a box of precious ointment upon his head.

The action displeased his disciples, who knew that their Master was not delighted with luxuries of any kind; and therefore they rebuked the woman, imagining that it would have been more acceptable to the Son of God if the ointment had been sold, and the money distributed among the sons and daughters of poverty and affliction.

To reprove the disciples, Jesus told them that it pleased the Divine Providence to order that there should always be persons in necessitous circumstances, that the virtuous might never want occasions for exercising their charity, but that those who did not now testify their love to him would never more have the opportunity of doing it, as the time of his ministry was near its period, when the king of terrors should enjoy a short triumph over his body; and therefore this woman had seasonably anointed him for his burial. And to make them sensible of their folly in blaming the woman for this her expression of love to him, he assured them that she should be highly celebrated for this action in every part of the world, and her memory live to the latest period of time.

Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, having been more forward than the rest in condemning the woman, thought the rebuke was particularly directed to him. Stung with the guilt of his conscience, he rose from the table, and went immediately into the city, to the high priest's palace, where he found the whole council assembled. His passion would not suffer him to reflect on the horrid deed he was going to commit: he immediately promised, for the reward of thirty shekels of silver, to betray into their hands his Lord and Master.

Having thus engaged with the rulers of Israel to put into their hands a person who had been long labouring for their salvation, who had often invited them, in the most pathetic manner, to embrace the benevolent terms of the gospel offered by the Almighty, he sought an opportunity to betray him in the absence of the multitude!

Our Lord, who well knew that the time of his suffering drew nigh, desired, therefore, to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. He was now going to finish the mighty work for which he came into the world, and consequently would not neglect to fulfil the smallest particular of the law of Moses. He therefore sent two of his disciples into the city to prepare a lamb, and make it ready for eating the Passover; telling them that they should meet a man bearing a pitcher of water, who would conduct them to his house, and show them a large upper room, furnished, where they were to make ready for him. He was willing, in this last transaction, to convince his disciples that he knew everything that should

befall him; that his sufferings were all predetermined by the Almighty; and that they were all on his own account submitted to voluntarily.

When night approached Jesus left Bethany, and everything being ready for him at the time he entered into the city, he sat down at the appointed hour. But knowing that his suffering was now near, he told his disciples, in the most affectionate manner, that he had greatly longed to eat the Passover with them before he suffered, in order to show them the strongest proofs of his love. These proofs were to give them a pattern of humility and charity by washing their feet, instructing them in the nature of his death and a propitiatory sacrifice, instituting the sacrament in commemoration of his sufferings; comforting them by the tender discourses recorded (John xiv., xv., xvi.), in which he gave them a variety of excellent directions, together with many gracious promises; and recommending them to the kind protection of his heavenly Father. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (Luke xxii. 15, 16.)

Having thus spoken, he arose from the table, laid aside his garment like a servant, and, with all the officiousness of an humble minister, washed the feet of his disciples without distinction, though one of them, Judas Iscariot, was a monster of impiety, that they might at once behold a conjunction of charity and humility, of self-denial and indifference, represented by a person glorious beyond expression—their great Lord and Master.

He washed their feet (according to a custom which prevailed in those hot countries, both before and after meat) in order to show them an example of the utmost humility and condescension.

The omnipotent Son of the Father lays everything aside, that he may serve his followers; heaven stoops to earth; one abyss calls upon another; and the miseries of man, which were almost infinite, are exceeded by a mercy equal to the immensity of the Almighty. He deferred this ceremony, which was a customary civility paid to honourable strangers at the beginning of their feast, that it might be preparatory to the second, which he intended should be a feast to the whole world, when all the followers of the blessed Jesus should have an opportunity, in a spiritual manner, of feeding on his flesh and drinking his blood.

When our blessed Saviour came to Peter he modestly declined it; but his Master told him that if he refused to submit implicitly to all his orders he could have no part with him, on which Peter cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." But Jesus told him that the person who had bathed himself had no reason to wash any part of the body except his feet, which he

might have dirtied by walking from the bath, and added, Ye are all clean as to the outward laver, but not as to the inward and spiritual laver. I well know that one of you will betray me.

When our gracious Lord had finished this menial service, he asked his disciples if they knew the meaning of what he had done, as the action was purely emblematical. You truly, added he, style me Master and

Christ washing the Feet of the Disciples. (*F. M. Brown.*)

Lord, for I am the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. But if I, your Master and your Lord, have condescended to wash your feet, you surely ought to perform, with the utmost pleasure, the humblest offices of charity one to another. I have set you a pattern of humility, and I recommend it to you.

And certainly nothing can more effectually show us the necessity of this heavenly temper of mind than

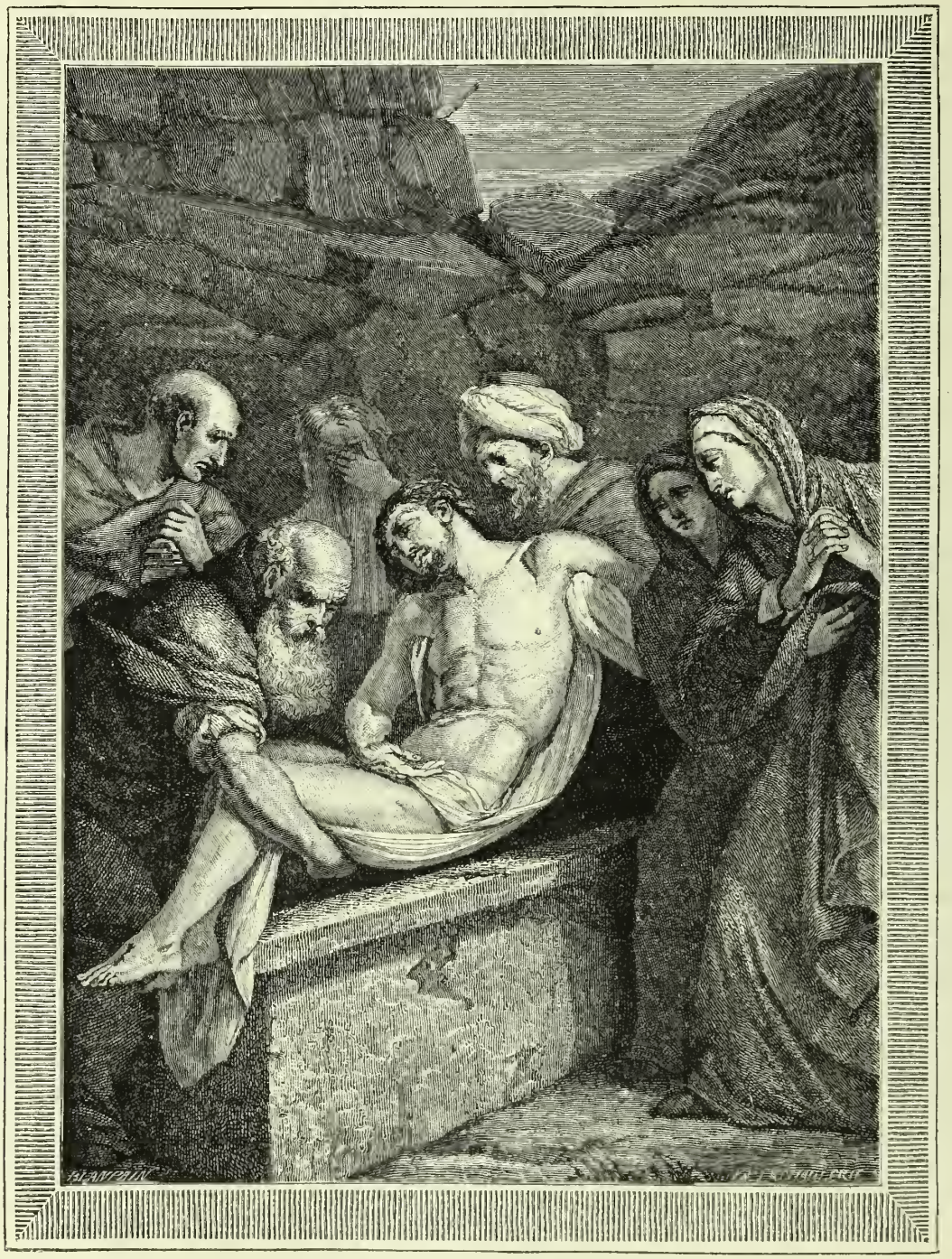
its being recommended to us by so great an example—a recommendation which, in the present circumstances, was particularly seasonable; for the disciples having heard their great Master declare that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, their minds were filled with ambitious thoughts; and therefore our blessed Saviour added, Ye need not be ashamed to follow my example in this particular, for no servant can think it beneath him to condescend to perform those actions his lord has done before him; and therefore, if he knows his duty, he will be happy if he practises it. He moreover added, that though he had called them all to the apostleship, and well knew the secret dispositions of every heart before he chose them, they need not be surprised that one among them should prove a traitor, as it was done that the scripture might be fulfilled, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."

As our blessed Saviour was now to be but a short time with his disciples, he thought proper to take his farewell of them, which he did in the most affectionate manner. These melancholy tidings greatly troubled them. They were unwilling to part with so kind a friend, so dear a master, so wise a guide, and so profitable a teacher, especially as they thought they should be left in a forlorn condition, a poor and helpless prey to the rage and hatred of a blind and malicious generation. They seemed willing to die with their Lord, if that might be accepted. Why cannot I follow thee? I will lay down my life for thee, was the language of one, and even all of them; but they could not support the thoughts of a disconsolate separation.

Their great and compassionate Master, seeing them thus dejected, endeavoured to cheer their drooping spirits: "Let not your hearts be troubled." Listen attentively to what I am going to deliver for your consolation: "I am going to prepare a place for you; I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also." A reviving admonition! They were one day to meet again their dear, their affectionate Master in a place where they should live together to all eternity.

But death makes so vast a distance between friends, and the disciples then knew so little of a future state, that they seemed to doubt whether they should, after their parting, meet their great Redeemer. They neither knew the place where he was going, nor the way that led to his kingdom. "Lord," said they, "as we know not whither thou goest, how can we know the way?" In answer to this question, he told them that he was "the way, the truth, and the life;" as if he had said, Through the propitiatory sacrifice I am about to offer, the sacred truths I have delivered, and the Divine assistance which I shall hereafter dispense, you are to obtain that happiness which I go to prepare for you.

But, lest all these arguments should not be sufficient to quiet their minds, he had still another, which could not fail of success. "If ye love me," says he, "ye will rejoice because I said, I go to the Father;" intimat-



The Burial of Christ. (*D. Crespi.*)

ing that he would consider it as a proof of their love to him if they ceased to mourn. They doubtless thought that, by grieving for his death, they expressed their love to their Master; and it seems strange that our Saviour should put so contrary an interpretation on their

friendly sorrow, or require so unnatural a thing of them as to rejoice at his departure. What! (might they think;) shall we rejoice at so amiable a friend's removal from us? or can we be glad that he retires, and leaves us in this vale of misery? No; it is impossible; the human heart on so melancholy an occasion has no disposition to rejoice.

Our blessed Saviour, therefore, adds this reason to solve the seeming paradox—because he was going to the Father; that is, he was going to ascend to the right hand of Infinite Power, from whence he would send them all the assistance they could desire. It must not, however, be supposed that he meant by these words that his disciples should not be concerned at his death, or that they could not love him unless they expressed a visible joy on this occasion. That would indeed have been a hard interpretation of their grief. He knew their grief flowed from love, and that if their love had not been strong, their sorrow had been much less. Indeed, their Master was fully convinced that love was the occasion of their sorrow; and therefore he used these arguments to mitigate it, and direct it in a proper course.

Nor did our Lord intend to intimate that all sorrow for so worthy a friend was unlawful, or an unbecoming expression of their love; doubtless he was not displeased to see his disciples so tenderly affected at his removal from them. He who shed tears at the grave of Lazarus, blended with sighs and groans, cannot be thought to forbid them wholly at his own. He therefore did not chide his disciples with angry reproaches, as though they had been entirely in the wrong, but gently reasoned with them by kind persuasion, "Let not your hearts be troubled," as rather pitying than condemning their sorrow.

Soon after Jesus had spoken these things his heart was greatly troubled to think that one of his disciples should prove his enemy: he complained of it at the table, declaring that one of them should betray him. The moving declaration greatly affected the disciples, and they began every one of them to say to their Master, "Lord, is it I?" But Jesus giving them no decisive answer, John, the beloved disciple, whose sweet disposition and other amiable qualities are perpetuated in the peculiar love his great Master bore him, and was now reclining on his bosom, asked him who among the disciples could be guilty of so detestable a crime. Jesus told him that the person to whom he should give the sop when he had dipped it was he who should betray him. Accordingly, as soon as he had dipped the sop in the dish, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, saying to him at the same time, "What thou doest, do quickly."

Judas received the sop without knowing anything of what his Master had told the beloved disciple; nor did any of the disciples, except St. John, entertain the least suspicion

that Judas was the person who would betray their Master.

The innocent disciples were, indeed, so deeply affected with his declaration that one of them should betray him, that they did not remark the words of Jesus to his apostate disciple, but continued to ask him who was the person that should be guilty of so unnatural a crime. Willing at last to satisfy their importunity, the blessed Jesus declared that the person who dipped his hand with him in the dish should betray him. This to the eleven was a joyful declaration, but confounding in the highest degree to Judas. Impudent as he was, it struck him speechless, pointing him out plainly, and displaying the foulness of his heart.

While Judas continued mute with confusion, the blessed Jesus declared that his death should be brought about according to the decrees of Heaven, though that would not in the least mitigate the crime of the person who betrayed him; adding, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." Judas, having now recovered himself a little, asserted his innocence by a question which implied a denial of the charge; but his Master soon silenced him by positively affirming that he really was the person.

As various conjectures have been formed concerning the motives which induced the perfidious Judas cruelly to deliver up his innocent Master into the hands of his enemies, it may not be improper to cite those which appear to us more probable, though the decision must be entirely left to the reader.

Some are of opinion that he was induced to commit this villainy by the resentment of the rebuke given him by his Master for blaming the woman who came with the precious ointment, and anointed the head of Jesus as he sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper. But though this had doubtless its weight with the traitor, yet it could not, I think, be his only motive, because the rebuke was given in general to all the disciples, who had, perhaps, been equally forward with him in censuring the woman. Nor can we imagine, even if he had been rebuked alone, that so mild a reproof could provoke any person, however wicked, to the horrid act of murdering his friend, much less Judas, whose covetous disposition must have disposed him to bear everything from his Master, from whom he expected the highest preferment when he openly declared himself the Messiah, and took the reins of government into his own hands.

Others think that Judas betrayed his Master through covetousness. But if we understand by covetousness the reward given by the priests, this opinion is equally defective; for the sum was too small for the most covetous wretch to think equivalent to the life of a friend, especially when he expected from him the highest posts and advantages.

Others attribute the perfidy of

Judas to his doubting whether his Master was the Messiah, and that he betrayed him in a fit of despair. But of all the solutions this is the worst founded; for if Judas believed his Master to be an impostor, he must have observed something in his behaviour which led him to form such an opinion of him, and in that case he would doubtless have mentioned it to the chief priests and elders when he made the contract with them, which it is plain he did not, as they would have reminded him of it when he came back and expressed his remorse for what he had done. It should also be observed that, had Judas given them any intimations of this kind, they would doubtless have urged them against our blessed Saviour himself in the course of his trial, when they were at so great a loss for witnesses to support their accusations; and against the apostles afterwards, when they reproved them for speaking in the name of Jesus. Besides, had Judas thought his Master an impostor, and proposed nothing by his treachery but the price he put upon his life, how came he to sell him for such a trifle, when he well knew that the chief priests and rulers would have given him any sum, rather than not have gotten him into their hands?

In fine, the supposition that Judas believed his Master to be an impostor is directly confuted by the solemn declaration he made to the priests when he declared the deepest conviction of the innocence of our great Redeemer. "I have sinned," said he, "in betraying the innocent blood."

It must be remembered that the remorse he felt for his crime when he saw his Master condemned was too bitter to be endured, so that he fled even to the king of terrors for relief.

The evangelist St. John tells us that he was of so covetous a disposition as to steal money out of our Lord's bag; and hence we have sufficient reason to believe that he first followed Jesus with a view of obtaining riches and other temporal advantages, which he expected the Messiah's friends would enjoy. It likewise authorises us to think that, as he had hitherto reaped none of these advantages, he might grow impatient under the delay, and the rather as Jesus had lately discouraged all ambitious views among his disciples, and neglected to embrace the opportunity of erecting his kingdom which was offered him by the multitude who accompanied him into Jerusalem with shouts, and crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" His impatience, therefore, becoming excessive, inspired him with the thought of delivering his Master into the hands of the council, firmly persuaded that he would then be obliged to assume the dignity of the Messiah, and consequently be able to reward his followers. For as this court was composed of the chief priests, elders, and scribes—that is, the principal persons of the sacerdotal order, the representatives of the great families,

and the doctors of the law—the traitor did not doubt that his Master, when brought before so august an assembly, would assert his pretensions to the title of Messiah, prove his claim to their full conviction, gain them over to his interest, and immediately enter on his regal dignity. And though he must be sensible that the measures he took to compass this intention were very offensive to our Saviour, yet he might think the success of it would procure his pardon from so compassionate a Master, and even recommend him to favour. In the meantime, his project, however plausible it might appear to one of his turn, was far from being free from difficulty; and therefore, while he revolved it in his own mind, many things might occur to stagger his resolution. At length, thinking himself affronted by the rebuke of Jesus at the time when the woman anointed the head of his Master, he was provoked to execute the resolution he had formed of obliging him to alter his measures. Rising, therefore, directly from the table, he went immediately into the city, to the palace of the high priest, where he found the council assembled, consulting how they might take Jesus by subtilty in the absence of the multitude. To them he made known his intention of delivering his Master into their hands, and undertook, for a small sum of money, to conduct a band of armed men to the place where the Saviour of the world usually spent the night with his disciples, where they might apprehend him without the least danger of a tumult.

Some reasons may be offered in support of this opinion concerning the motives which induced Judas to betray his Master. First, from the nature of the contract: "What will ye give me," said he, "and I will deliver him unto you?" He did not mean that he would deliver him up to be put to death; for though the priests had consulted among themselves how they might destroy Jesus, they had not been so abominably wicked as to declare their intention publicly; they only proposed to bring him to trial for assuming the character of the Messiah, and to treat him as it should appear he deserved. The offer, therefore, which Judas made them of delivering him up was in conformity to their public resolutions. Nor did they understand it in any other light; for had the priests thought that his design in this was to get his Master punished with death, they must also have thought that he believed him to be an impostor, in which case they would doubtless have produced him as one of their principal evidences, no person being more proper. Also, when Judas returned to them with the money, declaring that he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood, instead of replying, "What is that to us? see thou to that," it was the most natural thing in the world to have upbraided him with the stain he had put upon his Master's character by the contract they had made with him.

It is true they called the money they gave him "the price of blood;" but they did not mean this in the strictest sense, as they had neither hired Judas to assassinate his Master, nor can they be supposed to have charged themselves with the guilt of murdering him. It was only the price of blood in consequence of being the reward they had given to the traitor for putting it in their power to take away the life of Christ under the colour and form of public justice. Now, it may be doubted whether Judas asked the money as a reward of his service. He covetously, indeed, kept it; and the priests, for that reason, called it the price of blood.

In short, Judas knew that the rulers could not take away the life of any person whatsoever, the Romans having deprived them of that power, and therefore could have no design of this kind in delivering him up; not to mention that it was a common opinion among the Jews that the Messiah could never die—an opinion that Judas might easily embrace, having seen his Master raise several persons, and, among the rest, one who had been in the grave no less than four days.

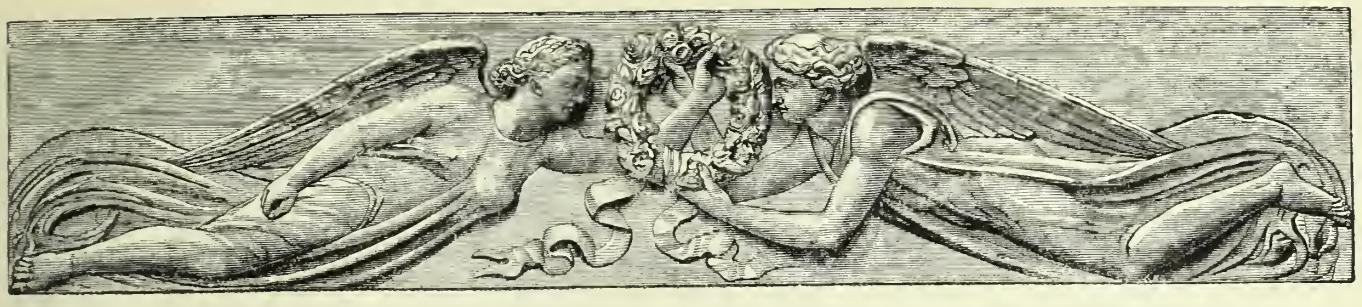
Another reason which may be assigned in confirmation of this opinion is, the traitor's hanging himself when he found him condemned, not by the governor, but by the council, whose prerogative it was to judge prophets. Had Judas proposed to take away the life of his Master, the sentence of condemnation passed upon him, instead of filling him with despair, must have gratified him, being the accomplishment of his project, whereas the light wherein I have endeavoured to place his conduct shows this circumstance to have been perfectly natural.

He knew him to be perfectly innocent, and expected that he would have wrought such miracles before the council as should have constrained them to believe. Therefore, when he found that nothing of this kind was done, and that the priests had passed the sentence of condemnation upon him, and were carrying him to the governor to get it executed, he repented of his rash and covetous project, came to the chief priests and elders, the persons to whom he had betrayed him, offered them their money again, and solemnly declared the deepest conviction of his Master's innocence, hoping that they would have desisted from the persecution. But they were obstinate, and would not relent, upon which his remorse arose to such a pitch that, unable to support the torments of his conscience, he went and hanged himself.

Thus it is probable that the traitor's intention in delivering up his Master was not to get him punished with death, but only to lay him under a necessity of proving his pretensions before the grandees, whom he had hitherto shunned; thinking that if they had yielded, the whole nation would immediately

have been raised forthwith to the summit of their expectations.

This account of Judas's conduct is by no means calculated to lessen the foulness of his crime, which was the blackest imaginable; for even in the light above mentioned it implied both an insatiable avarice and a wilful opposition to the counsels of Providence, and rendered the actor of it a disgrace to human nature. But it is calculated to set the credibility of the traitor's action in a proper light, and to show that he was not moved to it by anything suspicious in the character of his Master; because, according to his view of it, his perfidy, instead of implying that he entertained suspicions of his Master's integrity, plainly proved that he had the fullest conviction of his being the Messiah. Nor was it possible for any one who had been present at the miracles which Jesus wrought, and the doctrines which he delivered, to admit of a doubt of his being the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind, unless blinded by the most obstinate prejudice.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

Jesus institutes the Sacrament in commemoration of his death and sufferings. Settles a dispute which arose amongst his disciples. Predicts Peter's cowardice in denying his Master. Fortifies his disciples against the approaching shock. Foretells Peter's cowardice again. Preaches to, and prays with, his disciples for the last time. Passionate address of our Lord to his Father in the garden.

THE great Redeemer, ever mindful of the grand design of his mission, even the salvation of lost and perishing sinners, was not in the least affected by the treachery of his apostate disciple; for, knowing that he must become a sacrifice for sin, &c., he instituted the sacrament of his supper to perpetuate the memory of it throughout all ages. Accordingly, as they were eating the paschal supper, "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." (Matt. xxvi. 26, &c.) Observe this rite no longer in remembrance of your deliverance from Egypt, but in remembrance of me, who, by dying for you, will bring you out of the spiritual bondage, a bondage far worse than the Egyptian under which your fathers groaned, and will establish you in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Do it in remembrance of me, who, by laying down my life, will ransom you from sin, from death, from hell, and will set open the gates of heaven to you, that you may enter immortality in triumph.

Having given the bread to his disciples, he also took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." All of

you, and all of my disciples in all ages, must drink of this cup, because it represents my blood shed for the remission of the sins of mankind; my blood, by which the new covenant between God and man is ratified. It is, therefore, my blood of the new covenant; so that this institution exhibits to your joyful meditation the grand basis of the hopes of the children of men, and perpetuates the memory of it to the end of the world. He added that he would not drink henceforth of the

The Last Supper. (*C. Müller.*)

fruit of the vine until that day when he should drink it new with them in his Father's kingdom.

The manifestation of the Son of God is the most illustrious, the most momentous event that is possible to engage the meditations of mankind. To his life and death, his resurrection and ascension into glory, we are indebted for our hopes and assurances of pardon, for our peace, for our happiness. To procure our benefit, he made the most amazing condescension from the dignity he en-

joyed with his Father by putting on the veil of flesh; he poured Divine instruction from his lips, and shone forth with an all-perfect and all-lovely example. For our benefit he submitted to a course of the most cruel treatment from his bitter enemies, to the agonies of the cross, and to the stroke of the king of terrors. For our benefit he rose again with power and lustre, ascended into the mansions of eternal happiness, manages our affairs with the Almighty, and holdeth the reins of government. With the greatest wisdom and goodness, therefore, this beneficent Jesus instituted a rite that should recall his love to our memories, and awake each pious passion in our breast—a rite which, by the breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine, should represent to us in a striking manner that most signal proof of the affection both of himself and his heavenly Father, when his tender frame was exposed to wounds and bruises, when streams of the most precious blood issued from his sacred veins.

The more we reflect on this instance of Divine love, the more we shall perceive that there was a peculiar propriety in pointing out, by a particular ordinance, a fact of such immense importance in the scheme of revelation. Nay, we may even venture to assert that in some dark and corrupt ages, when the Scriptures were little known by the common people, and hardly studied by the priests, the death of our Saviour would have been almost forgotten, had not the remembrance of it been renewed by the celebration of this sacred ordinance.

It should also be remembered that the vanities of the world, the allurements of sensual pleasure, the charms of ambition, the splendour of riches, in short, temptations from present objects of every kind, have often too fatal an influence on our temper and conduct. They have a fatal aptitude to draw the soul aside to folly, and to obliterate the impressions of things Divine. It was, therefore, a wise, a kind intention of our great Redeemer, by a frequent repetition of the sacramental feast, to call back the wandering heart of man to a sense of his duty and obligations as a Christian.

Besides, though the religion of the immaculate Jesus is altogether gentle, generous, and beneficent; though its whole tendency is to correct the passions, sweeten the dispositions, and enlarge the affections of men; and though it enforces all this upon us by motives surprisingly powerful and affecting, yet such is the perverseness of the human heart that jealousies and contentions, envy, wrath, and malice, too often find admittance there. Was it not, then, an instance of our Saviour's wisdom and benevolence, by uniting us together at the sacrament of his body and blood, to urge the putting away all bitterness, anger, evil speaking, and revenge, and to inspire us with condescension, compassion, and love?

How careful, therefore, ought we

to be in performing this duty appointed by our dying Saviour! We should, in order to receive it worthily, employ our meditation on the design and excellency of the gospel; on the noble system of the doctrines and duties it contains; on the illustrious, Divine, and complete example of the blessed Jesus; on the important privileges, the valuable promises, and the ravishing prospects his revelation affords; and on the bright and convincing evidence with which it is attended.

We should contemplate that essential and unparalleled benevolence of the Father in forming the scheme of our redemption; on the readiness manifested by the Son of God in undertaking our cause; and on his wonderful transactions in the prosecution of this grand, this amazing work. Above all, we should impress upon our souls a strong sense of the special and immediate purposes for which this sacrament was appointed.

When we actually join in communion we should be careful that our affections be properly directed and warmly engaged. To have our hearts fixed upon the vanities, the profits, and the cares of this world is a direct violation of the ordinance, and therefore we should be extremely careful to maintain a right temper and behaviour at that time. We should study to abstract our thoughts as much as possible from every foreign, every terrestrial consideration, and to have our passions fervently employed in the solemn service. "Retire, O my soul," each of us should say, "from this inferior scene of things, from all its pleasures and all its pursuits, and hold communion with the Almighty and his Son, the immaculate Jesus. Meditate upon that infinite grace of Omnipotence which contrived the amazing plan that displayed pardon, peace, and endless happiness to so undeserving a creature as thou art. Recollect that surprising condescension and tenderness of thy compassionate Redeemer, which induced him to bring down from heaven salvation to the sons of men. Call to mind the admirable instructions he offered, the charming pattern he exhibited, the hard labours and sufferings he endured in the course of his ministry; especially call to mind the ignominy, the reproaches, the agonies he endured when he hung on the cross, and purchased for thee eternal mercy. Think upon these affecting subjects till thine heart is filled with sorrow for thine iniquities; till thy faith becomes lively, active, and faithful; till thy gratitude and love are elevated to the highest pitch; till thy obedience is rendered uniform, steady, and complete. Hast thou, O my God and Parent of universal nature! hast thou so illustriously manifested thy compassion for sinners as not to spare thine own Son? Hast thou sent the Saviour into this lower world in order to raise the children of men to immortality, perfection, and glory? And am I now in thy presence on purpose

to celebrate this institution, which requireth me to commemorate the death of the great Messiah, to declare my public acceptance of his excellent revelation, and my regard to my Christian brethren? May, then, the remembrance of his beneficence dwell upon my mind and upon my tongue for ever and ever! May I consider and comply with the intention of his gospel; and may the sentiments of kindness and charity towards all my fellow-mortals and fellow-disciples reign in my breast with increasing purity, with increasing zeal!"

Such are the views that should possess our souls when we partake of this sacred ordinance. But it will signify little to entertain these views at that time, unless the effects of them are apparent in our future conduct and conversation; for a transient flow of affections or sallies of immediate delight were not principally intended in this institution.

The blessed Jesus did not ordain it as a ceremony or charm, but as a proper method of establishing our hearts in the fear and love of God, who gave his only beloved Son to die for wretched sinners. Though ye have, therefore, O Christians! obeyed the Redeemer's command in this appointment, and found your passions greatly moved, yet this is not the whole required at your hands; it will justly be expected that you should live to the honour of your Divine Master. As you have solemnly professed your faith in him, and your love towards him, the reality of your faith and love should be demonstrated by walking more strictly in the way of his precepts, and by abounding in that heavenly character and temper which his spotless example so engagingly recommends. Thus only will the sacrament become subservient to the most beneficial purposes; thus only will it be instrumental in qualifying us for sharing in the dignity and felicity possessed by our exalted Saviour.

May, therefore, all the followers of the immaculate Jesus, by uniting together at his sacred table, advance from holiness to holiness, till they arrive at the regions of eternal felicity!

Our blessed Saviour, after delivering the sacramental cup and telling them that his blood was shed for them, mentioned the treachery of Judas a second time: "But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." This second declaration was made very properly after the institution of the sacrament, which exhibits the highest instance of our great Redeemer's love to mankind—his dying to obtain the remission of their sins; for it abundantly proves that the person who could deliberately be guilty of such an injury to so kind a friend must have been a monster, the foulness of whose ingratitude cannot be reached by the force of language.

Some of the disciples, particularly struck with horror at the thought of

Judas's treachery, rebuked him by asking him with surprise how he could betray his Master. This accusation Judas no doubt repelled by impudently denying the fact; but consciousness of guilt giving edge to the reproaches of his brethren, and to every circumstance of the affair, he immediately left the company, exceedingly displeased at thinking himself insulted and affronted.

The important, the awful scene now approached when the great work was to be finished. The traitor Judas was gone to the chief priests and elders for a band of soldiers to apprehend him; but this did not discompose the Redeemer of mankind: he took occasion to meditate on the glory that would accrue both to himself and to the Almighty from those sufferings, and spake of it to his disciples. "Now," said he, "is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." He also told them that, having already done honour to his Father by the past actions of his life, and being about to honour him yet further by his sufferings and death, which would display his perfections, particularly his infinite love to the human race, in the most astonishing and amiable light, he was, in his turn, to receive honour from his Father; intimating that his human nature was to be exalted to the right hand of Omnipotence, and that his mission from God was to be supported by irrefragable attestations. But his disciples, imagining that he spake of the glory of a temporal kingdom, their ambition was again revived, and they began to dispute with as much keenness as ever which of them should be greatest in that kingdom. This contention Jesus composed by the arguments he had formerly used for the same purpose. Among the Gentiles, said he, they are reckoned the greatest who have the greatest power, and have exercised it in the most absolute manner; but your greatness shall be very different from theirs; it shall not consist in being unlimited with regard to tyrannical power, even though it should be joined with an affectation of titles which denote qualities truly honourable; but whosoever desires to be great or chief among you, let him be so by his humility and the service he renders to the rest, in imitation of me, your Master, whose greatness consists in this, that I am become the servant of you all; adding, as they had continued with him in this temptation, he would bestow upon them such a kingdom as his Father had appointed for him. At the same time, to check their ambition, and lead them to form a just notion of his kingdom, he told them that he was soon to leave them, and that whither he was going they could not at that time follow him; for which reason, instead of contending with one another which of them should be the greatest, they would do well to be united among themselves in the happy bond of love; for, by loving one another sincerely and fervently, they would

prove themselves his disciples, to the conviction of mankind, who could not be ignorant that love was a distinguished part of his character.

This is termed a new commandment, not because mutual love had never been enjoined on mankind before, but because it was a precept of peculiar excellency; for the word translated "new," in the Hebrew language denotes excellency and truth. He also called this a new commandment because they were to exercise it under a new relation, according to a new measure, and from new motives. They were to love one another in the relation of his disciples, and in that degree of love which he had shown to them; for they were to lay down their lives for the brethren.

This excellent doctrine, however, did not make such an impression on Peter as the words which Jesus had spoken concerning a place whither his disciples could not come. He therefore replied by asking where he was going, to which Jesus answered, "Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but shalt follow me afterward."

Further, to make his disciples humble, watchful, and kindly affectioned one towards another, he assured them that Satan was seeking to ruin them all by his temptations. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Peter was greatly offended that his Master should have singled him out as the weakest, for so he interpreted his praying for him particularly; and, supposing that he mentioned Satan's seeking to sift him as the thing which would hinder him from following his Master, replied, "Why cannot I follow thee now? Is there any road more terrible than the dark valley of the shadow of death? Yet through these black and gloomy shades I am willing this moment to accompany thee."

Jesus, knowing his weak, though sincere resolution, answered, "Art thou so very confident of thine own strength? I tell thee that this very night, before the cock crows, thou shalt thrice deny me to be thy Master."

Our blessed Saviour, having finished what he had to say to Peter in particular, turned himself to his other disciples, and put them in mind how that when they were first sent out he directed them to rely wholly upon the Almighty for assistance. "When I sent you formerly," said he, "to preach the gospel, you may remember I ordered you to go without any provision either for your sustenance or defence, assuring you that though you would indeed meet with great opposition, yet Providence would dispose some men in all places to be your friends, and to furnish you with all necessaries; and accordingly you found that you wanted for nothing, but were wonderfully supported, without any care or provision of your own,

in the whole journey, and finished your work with success. But now the case is very different; the time of that greatest trial and distress, whereof I have often forewarned you, is just at hand; and you may now make all the provision in your power, and arm yourselves against it as much as you are able. I have finished the work for which I was sent into the world; and nothing now remains for me but to undergo those sufferings which the prophets have foretold concerning me, and to complete this whole dispensation of Providence by submitting at last to a cruel and ignominious death."

The disciples, thinking that their great Master meant that they should arm themselves in a literal sense, and endeavour to oppose the assaults that would shortly be made upon them by the Jews, answered, "Lord, here are two swords." But the blessed Jesus, who only intended to convey an idea of their approaching distress and temptations, and to arm them against the surprise, replied, "It is enough. You need not trouble yourselves about any more weapons of this nature for your defence."

"Be not terrified and disconsolate," added the compassionate Jesus, "because I have told you that I must undergo great sufferings, and be taken away from you for a time. You have always been taught to believe in God, who is the Almighty Preserver and Governor of all things, and to rely on him for deliverance in every affliction and distress. Learn now in like manner to believe in me, who have all power committed to me, as a preserver and head of my church; and trust in me to accomplish fully all things that I have promised you. If you do this, and persist steadfastly in the belief of my doctrine and in the obedience of my commands, nothing in this vale of misery, not even persecution or death itself, shall be able to hinder you from attaining the happiness I have proposed to you. For in heaven, my Father's house, there is abundant room to receive you, otherwise I would not have filled your minds with the hopes and expectation of happiness. But as there are mansions sufficient for you in another state, you may with confidence and assurance hope for the full accomplishment of my promises, notwithstanding all this present world may contrive or act against you. And ye ought also to bear patiently my departure from you at this time, since I only leave you to prepare a place, and open the portals of those eternal habitations where I shall be ever with you. When I have prepared a place for you in that eternal state, I will again return and take you to myself. Nor shall you ever more be separated from me, but continue with me to all eternity in full participation of my eternal glory and happiness in the blissful regions of the heavenly Canaan. You must now surely know whither I am going, and the way that leads to these happy seats of immortality.'

But the disciples, whose minds were

not yet fully weaned from the expectation of a temporal power and glory, did not understand this discourse of their great and beloved Master. Accordingly, Thomas replied, "Lord, we cannot comprehend whither thou art going, and therefore must needs be ignorant of the way;" to which the blessed Jesus answered, "I myself, as I have often told you, am the true and only way to life; nor can any man go thither by any other way. If ye say ye do not know the Father, I tell you that no man who knoweth me can be ignorant of my Father, of his will, and the manner of pleasing him; for my Father and I are one, so that if ye know me, ye must know the Father also. And indeed ye do know him, and have been sufficiently instructed in his precepts." Philip answered, "Lord, show us but once the Father, and we shall be fully satisfied." Jesus replied, "Have I been so long continually with you, and dost thou not yet know me, Philip? I tell you, I and my Father are the same; so that to know one is to be acquainted with both. What, then, can you mean by desiring to see the Father, as if you could still be ignorant of him after being so long acquainted with me? Do you not believe that the Father and I are one and the same? Whatsoever I speak is the declaration of his will, and whatsoever I do is the operation of his power. Believe me, that the Father and I are one. And if ye refuse to believe my own affirmation, yet at least let my works convince you, for they carry in them undeniable evidences of a Divine power. Surely, then, you have matter sufficient to comfort and support your spirits under the thoughts of my departure from you. Ye have abundant reason to believe that I have power to perform all the promises I have made you, and that the design of my departure is actually to perform them. When I am returned to my Father, ye shall soon receive sufficient pledges of my care and remembrance of you. Ye shall be endued with power not only to perform the same works ye have seen me do, as healing diseases, giving sight to the blind, casting out devils, and the like, for the conviction of the Jews, but even to do greater things than those—to speak with all kinds of tongues, and to propagate my religion among the Gentiles, even through all the nations of the earth. And whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father in my name, as being my disciples, and in order to promote the work of the gospel, shall certainly be granted you. That God may be greatly glorified by the extraordinary success and spreading of the religion of his Son, I say that whatsoever ye shall ask I will take care, after my return to the Father, that it shall be granted you. Only ye must remember, as the necessary condition upon which all depends, that ye be careful above all things to continue steadfast and immovable in your obedience to my commands. This is the only true mark you can give of the sincerity

of your love towards me; it is more than your grieving at my departure, or any other external indication of zeal whatsoever. The Father, I say, shall send you another advocate and comforter, even his Holy Spirit, the author and teacher of truth, who shall guide and direct, assist and comfort, you in all cases. This Spirit the sensual and corrupt world cannot receive, having no knowledge of him, nor disposition to be governed by him. But ye know him, and are disposed to entertain him. He is already in you by his secret and invisible efficacy, and shall hereafter appear in you openly by great and visible manifestations.

"Thus, though I must depart from you, yet I do by no means leave you comfortless. I leave with you a promise of the Holy Spirit; and I leave you in expectation also of my own return. For though after a very little while I shall appear no more to the world, yet to you I will appear again; for I shall live again, and ye also shall live with me. When, therefore, I have conquered and triumphed over death, ye shall understand more fully, and it shall appear more visibly by great and manifest effects, that I act in all things agreeably to my Father's will, and am perfectly invested with his power, and that ye in like manner have my power and commission communicated to you; so that there is a perfect unity and communion between us. Only ye must remember that the one necessary condition on which all depends is, that ye continue steadfast and immovable in your faith in me, and in your obedience to my commands. He, and he only, who embraces my doctrine, and obeys and practises it, shall be judged to be sincere in his love towards me. And he who loves me in that manner shall be loved by my Father, and I myself will also love him, and manifest myself to him."

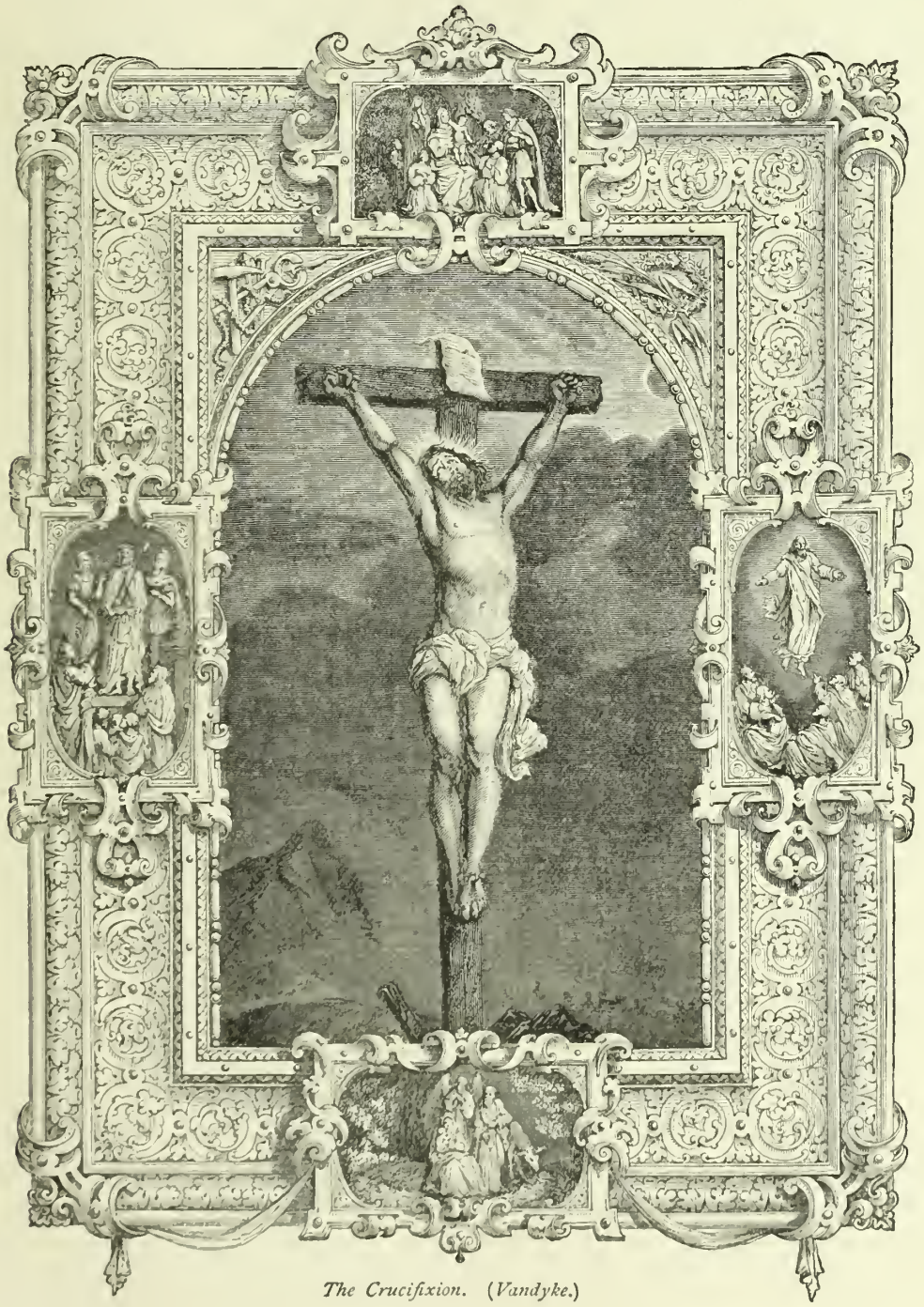
Here Judas Thaddeus interrupted his Master, saying, "Lord, why wilt thou choose to manifest thyself to us, a few particular persons, and not to the generality of the world?"

Jesus replied, "I have already told you the reason for my acting in this manner—because the generality of the world are not disposed to obey my commandments, the necessary condition of maintaining communion with me. But ye are disposed to embrace my doctrine, and to obey it, and therefore I manifest myself to you. And whoever else will so love me as to keep my commandments, him also will I and my Father love, and will maintain communion with him, and all spiritual blessings shall be poured down upon him, and he shall be made partaker of happiness and eternal life.

"On the contrary, whoever loves me not—that is, obeys not my commandments—shall have no intercourse or communion with me. Neither will my Father love or honour him, or make any manifestations of himself to him; for as my commandments are not my own, but

the Father's commandments, therefore whoever dishonours me, my Father will look upon him as dishonouring himself.

"These things have I briefly spoken to you, according to the shortness of the time I am to continue with you, and to comfort you for the present



The Crucifixion. (*Vandyke.*)

against my departure. But when the Comforter whom I promised you is come, even the Holy Spirit, whom my Father shall send you on my account, he shall instruct you more fully, recalling to your remembrance what you have forgotten, explaining what is yet obscure, and supplying

what is further necessary to be taught you, and to be understood by you.

"In the meantime I take my leave of you, and my blessing I leave with you; not formally, and after the common fashion of the world, but affectionately and sincerely, retaining a careful remembrance of you, and with an earnest desire and intention of returning again speedily to you. Wherefore be not overmuch grieved for me and my departure, nor fearful of what may then befall yourselves. I go away from you, but it is with an intention, as I have already told you, to return to you again. If you loved me with a wise and understanding affection, ye would rejoice, instead of grieving at my present departure, because I am going to my Father, the Supreme Author of all glory and happiness.

"These things I have now told you before they come to pass, that when ye see them happen your faith in me, and your expectation of the performance of all my promises, may be confirmed and strengthened. The time will not allow me to say much more to you at present: my end draweth near. The ruler of this world, the prince of the power of darkness, is at this instant employing all his wicked instruments to apprehend and destroy me. Not that either the power of the devil or the malice of man can at all prevail over me; but because the time of my suffering, according to the appointment of Divine Wisdom, is arrived, and that I may demonstrate to the world my love and obedience to my Father. I willingly submit myself to be put to death by the hands of sinful and cruel men. Rise up; let us be going, that I may enter on my sufferings." (See John, chap. xiv.)

Having thus spoken, they finished the Passover with singing a hymn, and went out to the Mount of Olives.

On their arrival at the place which was to be the scene of his sufferings, he desired them to fortify themselves by prayer, and forewarned them of the terrible effects his sufferings would have upon them: they would make them all stumble that very night, agreeably to the prophecy of Zechariah, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." To strengthen their faith, therefore, he not only mentioned his own resurrection, but told them they should see him in Galilee after he was risen from the dead.

On our blessed Saviour's mentioning the offence that his disciples would take at his suffering, Peter recollected what had been said to him in particular before they left the house. Grieving, therefore, afresh to find his Master entertain such thoughts of him, and being now armed with a sword, the vehemence of his temper urged him to boast a second time of his courageous and close attachment to his Master. "Though all men," said he, "should be offended because of thee, yet I will never be offended." But Jesus, knowing that human confidence and security were weak and frail, thought proper to

forewarn him again of his danger, and told him that the cock should not crow before he had denied him.

Peter, however, still continued to repeat his confidence: "I will die with thee, but never deny thee." The disciples all joined with Peter in professing their fixed resolution rather to suffer death than to deny their Master; but the event fully confirmed the prediction of our Saviour. From whence we may learn how ignorant men are of their own hearts, and that the strongest resolutions in their own strength avail nothing.

The compassionate Redeemer of mankind, not willing to lose one single moment of the short time of his ministry that yet remained, continued to instruct his disciples in the great truths he came into the world to explain; and, from the vines which were growing round him on the Mount of Olives, he began his excellent discourse with the parable of the vine, to the following import.

"Hitherto," said the blessed Jesus, "the Jewish church and nation have been the peculiar care of Providence, as a choice and goodly vine, likely to bring forth much fruit, is the special care of the husbandman. But from henceforth my church, my disciples, and the professors of my religion, of what country or nation soever they be, shall become the people of God, and the peculiar care of Divine Providence. I will be to them as the root and stock of a vine, of which they are the branches, and my Father the husbandman and vine-dresser. As, in the management of a choice vine, the skilful vine-dresser cuts off all barren and superfluous branches, that they may not burden nor exhaust the tree, and prunes and dresses the fruitful branches, that they may grow continually and bear more fruit; so, in the government of my church, all useless, wicked, and incorrigible members my Father, by his judgment, cuts off and destroys; but those who are sincerely pious and good, he, by the various and merciful dispensations of his providence towards them, tries, purifies, and amends, that they may daily improve, and be more and more abundant in all good works.

"Now ye, my apostles, are such members as these, being purified in heart and mind, and prepared for every good work, by your lively faith in me, and sincere resolutions to obey my commands. Continue steadfastly in this state, and then you may be sure of deriving all spiritual blessings from me, as the branches receive sap and nourishment from the vine. But as a branch, without continuing in the vine, cannot bear any fruit, but presently dries up and perishes, so ye, unless ye continue steadfast in your communion with me by a lively faith and sincere obedience, so as to receive grace and spiritual blessings, can never bring forth any good fruit of true holiness and righteousness, but will fall into vanity, superstition, and wickedness, and at last utterly perish.

"I am, as it were, I say, the root

and stock of the vine, whereof ye are the branches. He that continues to adhere to me by constant faith in me shall bring forth much fruit unto everlasting life, even as a branch which continues to grow in a vine, and receives sap and nourishment from it. But he that does not continue his relation to me in this manner is a false and useless professor, and shall be cast out from me, and perish for ever, even as a fruitless branch is cut off from the vine, and left to wither and dry, and is at last burnt in the fire.

"If ye continue in me by believing my words, and holding fast what ye believe, and obeying and practising it accordingly, no power of malice, either of men or of devils, shall be able to hurt you or oppose your doctrines. For though I be absent from you in body, yet I will hear your prayers, and my Father himself also will hear you; and whatsoever ye shall ask for the glory of the Almighty and the propagation of my true religion in the world shall certainly be granted you. But, above all things, carefully remember to demonstrate your continuance in me by abounding in all good works of holiness, righteousness, and charity. This is the honour which my Father desires and expects from you, even as it is the glory and desire of a vine-dresser that his vine should bring forth much fruit. And this is the honour that I myself expect from you—that ye should prove yourselves to be really and indeed my disciples by imitating my example and obeying my commands. This ye are bound to do, not only in duty, but in gratitude also; for as my Father hath loved me, so have I also loved you; and ye in like manner ought to love me again, that you may continue to be loved by me. But the way to express your love towards me, and to continue to be loved by me, is to keep my commandments, even as I, by keeping my Father's commandments, have expressed my love towards him, and continue to be loved by him.

"These things have I spoken to you before my departure, that the comfort ye have taken in my presence may be continued in my absence, and even increased at the coming of the Holy Spirit, as it will be upon this condition, which I have so often repeated to you—that you keep my commandments. And the principal of these commandments is, that ye love one another; not after the common fashion of the world, but in such a manner as I have loved you. Nor can you be ignorant what sort of love that is, when I tell you that I am now going to lay down my life for you. This is the highest instance in which it is possible for a man to express his love towards his greatest friends and benefactors; but this I am now going to do for you and for all mankind. I do not consider you as my benefactors, but as my friends, upon this easy condition only—that ye keep my commandments. I might, indeed, justly call you servants, con-

sidering the infinite distance between you and me, and the obligation ye have to obey my commandments; but I have not treated you as servants, who are not admitted into their master's counsels, but as friends, revealing to you the whole will of my Father with all freedom and plainness.

"I have, I say, behaved myself to you as to the nearest friends. Not that you first obliged me, or did any acts of kindness for me; but I have freely, and of my own good pleasure, chosen you to be my apostles, and the preachers of my gospel, that you may go and declare the will of God to the world, and bring forth much and lasting fruit in the conversion of men to the knowledge of the truth, and to the profession and practice of true religion and virtue. In the performance of this work, whatsoever ye shall ask of my Father in my name, in order to enable you to perform it effectually and with full success, shall certainly be granted you.

"Now all these things which I have spoken unto you concerning the greatness of my love towards you in choosing you to be my apostles, in revealing unto you the whole will of my Father, and in laying down my life for you, I have urged and inculcated upon you this reason chiefly, as I at first told you—that ye may learn after my example to love one another. The world, indeed, you must expect will hate and persecute you upon my account; but this you ought not to be surprised or terrified at, knowing that it is no worse treatment than I myself have met with before you.

"Be not, therefore, surprised when ye meet with opposition, nor think to find better treatment in the world than I myself have done. Remember what I have already told you—that the disciple is not above his Master; nor is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If men had generally and readily embraced my doctrine, you might, indeed, have had some reason to expect that they would willingly have received yours also. But since I myself have suffered great indignities and persecutions from wicked and perverse, from obstinate and incorrigible men, only for opposing their vices, it is highly reasonable that you should expect to undergo the like treatment upon the like account: in all which sufferings you will, moreover, have this further comfortable consideration to support you—that the justice of your own cause, and the injustice of your persecutors, will by that means most evidently appear, seeing ye are persecuted only for professing and preaching in my name the doctrine of true religion and virtue; and they persecute you only because they know not God, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in his commands.

"Indeed, had not I appeared to the world with all possible demonstrations of authority and truth, teaching men a most holy and unde-

niable doctrine, sufficient to reform their manners and amend their lives, and, moreover, demonstrating my Divine commission by such proofs as ought to satisfy and convince the most doubting and suspicious minds, they might have had some plea and excuse of ignorance for their unbelief. But now, since all reasonable evidence has been offered them, and proper methods used for their conversion and salvation, and yet they wilfully and obstinately reject these means of grace, it is plain they have no excuse for their sin; but they oppose and persecute you only because they will not forsake their worldly lusts, and out of mere malice will not bear to be instructed in the commands of the Almighty. So that they who oppose and persecute you, as they have before persecuted me, show plainly that they are haters of God and of his most holy commandments, which is, as I have already told you, a plain evidence of the justice of your own cause, and of the injustice of your persecutors.

"If I had not, I say, done such works among them as no man ever did, they might, indeed, have had some appearance of excuse for their sin. But now, having seen abundant proofs of my authority, and undeniable evidence of the truth of my doctrine, and yet wilfully and obstinately persisting in opposing it, because inconsistent with their lusts, it is plain that their dishonouring me is a dishonour done to God himself, and a direct contempt of his commands; so that they are utterly inexcusable. But it is no wonder, when men have given themselves wholly up to be governed by worldly affections, passions, and vices, they should act contrary to all the reason and evidence in the world, for this is but the natural consequence of obstinate and habitual wickedness; and hereby is only fulfilled in me what holy David long since prophetically complained of—that they hated him without a cause.

"But, notwithstanding all the opposition that wicked and incorrigible men will make against my doctrine, there will not be wanting powerful promoters of it who shall effectually overcome all opposition. For the Comforter, whom I said I will send from heaven, even that Spirit of truth which cometh forth and is sent from the Father, shall, when he cometh, with wonderful efficacy bear testimony to the truth of my doctrine, and cause it to spread through the world with incredible success. Nay, and ye yourselves also, though now so weak, fearful, and doubting, shall then very powerfully bear testimony to the truth of all the things whereof ye, having been all along present with me, have been eye-witnesses from the beginning. Thus have I warned you beforehand of the opposition and persecution ye must expect to meet with in the world, that when it cometh ye may not be surprised and terrified, so as to be discouraged thereby from persist-

ing in the performance of your duty.

"Ye must expect particularly that the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, men of great hypocrisy and superstition, zealous for their ceremonies and ritual traditions, but careless to know and obey the will of Omnipotence in matters of great and eternal obligation, and invincibly prejudiced against the spiritual holiness and purity of my doctrine; these, I say, you must expect will excommunicate you as apostates, and cast you out of all their societies as the vilest of malefactors. Nay, to such an absurd height of malice will their superstition carry them, that they will even fancy they promote the service of God and the cause of religion when they most barbarously murder and destroy you. But I have warned you of all this beforehand, that ye may prepare and fortify yourselves against it; and that, when it cometh to pass, ye may remember I foretold it to you, and your faith in me may thereby be strengthened.

"It was needless to acquaint you with these scenes of suffering while I was with you; but now, being about to leave you, I think it necessary to acquaint you what things are likely to come upon you after my departure, and also at the same time what comfort you may expect to support you under them.

"Now I must mention the melancholy part, namely, that I am going from you, and that great temptations will befall you in my absence: this, indeed, ye readily apprehend, and suffer your hearts to be overwhelmed with grief at the thoughts of it. But the comfortable parts of my discourse—namely, that my departure is only in order to return to him that sent me, and that I will soon after send you the Holy Spirit, and the other advantages that will thence result to you—are neither considered, nor are you solicitous about them. Nevertheless, if ye will listen, I will plainly tell you the truth. Ye are so far from having reason to be dejected at the thought of my departure, that, on the contrary, it is really profitable and expedient for you that I should now depart; for such is the order and dispensation of Providence towards you, and the appointment of my Father's eternal and all-wise counsel, that, before I go and take possession of my kingdom, the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, cannot be sent unto you; but when I am departed from you, and have all power in heaven and earth committed unto me, then I will send him unto you. And then, when he cometh, he shall abundantly support and comfort you under all your troubles; shall powerfully plead your cause against your adversaries; and shall, with wonderful efficacy, cause the doctrines of the gospel to spread and prevail in the world against all opposition. He shall particularly, and in a most extraordinary and convincing manner, make the world sensible of the greatness and heinousness of a sin of which they were not aware; of the righteousness and justice of a

dispensation they did not understand; and of the execution of a most remarkable judgment they did not expect.

"First, by wonderfully attesting and confirming the truth of my doctrine, by the gift of tongues and other wonderful signs, he shall convince the world of the greatness and heinousness of their sins in disbelieving and rejecting me.

"Secondly, by demonstrating that my departure out of the world was not perishing and dying, but only a returning to my Father in order to be invested with all power both in heaven and earth, he shall convince the world of the righteousness and justice of my cause, and of the excellency of that dispensation which I preached and declared to mankind.

"Lastly, by mightily destroying the power of the devil and the dominion of sin, and propagating the doctrine of a true religion in the world with wonderful efficacy and success, he shall convince men of my power and authority to execute judgment upon mine enemies, for the establishment of my kingdom upon the earth.

"There are yet many other things hereafter to be done in relation to the settling and establishing of my church, which if it were proper I would now acquaint you with, but ye are not yet prepared to understand and receive them.

"Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth, whom I promised you, is come, he shall enlarge your understandings, remove your prejudices, and instruct you in all necessary and Divine truths, to enable you to go through that great work which I have begun in person, and which I will carry on by your ministry; for the Spirit is not to begin any new work, or to found any new doctrine of himself; but as I have taught and will teach you only in my Father's name, so the Spirit shall instruct you only in mine and my Father's will, and in things necessary to promote and carry on the same design.

"Everything he does shall be only in order to manifest my glory and establish my religion in the world, even as everything that I have done has been only to manifest my Father's glory, and reveal his will to mankind. For as all that I have taught is only what I received from my Father, so all that the Spirit shall teach you is only what he receives from me.

"Whatsoever, I say, the Spirit shall teach you is only what he receives from me; for receiving from my Father I call receiving from me, and teaching his will is teaching mine, seeing all things that the Father hath are common to me, and all power and dominion by him committed to me.

"And now be careful to remember what matter for comfort I have given you, and support yourselves with it under the approaching distress. It is now, indeed, but a very little while before I shall be taken away from you; nevertheless, let not this

cause you to despair, for after I am departed it will be also a little while before I appear to you again, forasmuch as my being taken away from you is not perishing, but only returning to my Father."

At these last words of Jesus the disciples were greatly disturbed and troubled, not understanding his true meaning, that in a very short time he should be taken from them by death, and that, after having overcome death by a glorious resurrection, he would appear to them again before his ascension into heaven. Not understanding this, I say, they inquired one of another, "What can he mean by telling us that in a very little time he shall be taken out of our sight, and that in a very little time more we shall see him again, and this because he goeth to the Father? We cannot understand the meaning of all this."

Jesus, observing their perplexity, and knowing that they were desirous of asking him, replied, "Why are ye thus disturbed and perplexed about what I told you? Is it a thing so very hard to be understood that I said within a very little time I should be taken away from you, and that within a very little time more I should appear to you again? Verily, verily, I tell you I must very soon depart out of this world; and then the world, who are your enemies, will rejoice and triumph over you as if they had destroyed me, and wholly suppressed you. Ye, for your parts, will be overwhelmed with grief and sorrow; but within a short time I will return to you again, and then your sorrow shall be turned into exceeding great joy. Even as a woman when she is in labour hath great pain and sorrow for the present, but as soon as she is delivered forgets all her sufferings, and rejoices greatly at the birth of her son; so ye, while ye are under the immediate apprehension of my departure from you, and during that time of distress and temptation which shall befall you in my absence, will be full of sorrow and anxiety of mind; but when I return to you again, then ye shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and no power or malice of man shall ever be able to take from you any more the cause or continuance of it.

"But though I shall return to you again, and your hearts will thereupon be filled with inexpressible joy, and which never shall be taken from you any more, yet there will be no necessity that I should then continue long with you in person to instruct you upon every occasion, as I have now done with my own mouth; for, besides that the Holy Spirit will be sent to instruct you in all things necessary, my Father himself also will hear your petitions, and be ready to grant you whatsoever you shall desire of him in my name, and as being my disciples.

"Hitherto ye have asked nothing of God in my name; but from henceforth put up your petitions in my name, and whatsoever ye shall so ask

for the glory of God, and in order to enable you to go through the work of your ministry successfully, shall certainly be granted you, that your joy, which will begin at my appearing to you again after my death, may be completed by the wonderful success and efficacy of your own ministry.

"These things I have told you at present imperfectly and obscurely, according as your capacities are able to bear them; but the time is coming when I will speak to you with more openness, freedom, and plainness the whole will of my Father concerning the nature and establishment of my kingdom, and for what things and in what manner ye ought to pray unto him. At that time ye shall with firm assurance pray to my Father in my name for what ye want. And I need not tell you that I will intercede with the Father on your behalf; for, besides the love he has borne for me, and the power and authority my prayers have with him, he has, moreover, of himself a great love for you, and a ready disposition to grant your prayers, because ye are become grateful and acceptable to him by your love towards me, which ye have shown in embracing willingly that holy doctrine which I have revealed to you from him.

"To conclude: the sum of what I have told you is briefly and plainly this: I came down from heaven from God my Father, and have lived upon earth in the state of frail and mortal man, that I might reveal to mankind the will of my heavenly Father, and the way to attain eternal life and happiness; and now, having finished this great work, I am about to leave this world and return again to my Father, from whence I at first came."

These last words of Jesus being somewhat more plain and expressive than any he had before spoken, the disciples now clearly perceived that the departure he had so often mentioned was no other than his actual going out of this world. They replied, "Now, Lord, you speak plainly, and without any figure, so that we apprehend fully what you mean. And now that our curiosity is satisfied, you have likewise greatly confirmed our faith, having given us certain tokens whereby we are assured that you know all things, even the hearts and secret thoughts of men, since you have answered us a question which gave us great perplexity, and were desirous to ask your opinion, but were afraid; but now we are convinced that you are endued with a truly Divine power, and did indeed come forth from God;" to which Jesus answered, "And do you now at length firmly believe in me? Are you resolved to continue steadfast in this faith? Do you think yourselves able to persevere immovably in the profession of it? Be not confident of your own strength, but pray that ye may be delivered from temptation in the time of distress, such as will come upon you much sooner than ye expect. For I tell you that ye will all of ye, within a few hours, utterly forsake me and fly, in hopes

to secure yourselves, leaving me alone. And yet I should not say alone, since my Father is with me, who is more than all. I have, therefore, acquainted you with these things beforehand, that your minds may be furnished with sufficient matter of comfort and strength to bear up under all temptations, from the consideration of my having foretold both what distress will befall you, and how ye shall terminate your victory over all your enemies. You must, indeed, expect to meet with much affliction, but let not this discourage you. I have subdued the world: follow my example, and partake of my reward."

Having thus finished his discourse, Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed, saying, "O heavenly Father, now the time of my suffering, for which I was sent into the world, is arrived, I entreat thee to support me under it, and make me triumph over death by a glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven, that by this means the glory may redound to thee, and cause thy will to be believed and obeyed through all the world to the salvation of mankind, according to the full intent of that office and power with which thou didst originally invest me.

"In order to bring about this great design of salvation, I have declared thy will to mankind. I have published thy precepts and discharged the great mission intrusted to me; I have preached thy doctrine of repentance to salvation, and have finished the work which thou sentest me to do, to the glory of thy name upon earth; and now, to complete the great design, do thou, O Almighty Father, likewise glorify me with thine own self! Support me under my sufferings. Let me prevail and triumph over death by a glorious resurrection, and exalt me again to the same glory in heaven which I had with thee before the creation of the universe. I have manifested thy will to the disciples, the men that thou gavest me out of the world. To those persons thou didst in thine infinite wisdom appoint that thy truth should be made known. Therefore, to them I have revealed the mysteries of thy kingdom, the precepts of thy gospel, and the doctrine of thy salvation.

"And this doctrine they have willingly embraced, steadfastly adhered to, and sincerely obeyed, as they are fully satisfied and convinced that what I taught them as from thee was really a Divine doctrine taught by thine immediate appointment and command, and that I did not preach any human invention or institution of men, but was really sent by the Divine authority and commission. For these persons, therefore, I now pray, that as thou hast begun the work of their salvation by my preaching and revealing to them thy will while I have been present with them here upon earth, so also that thou wouldst preserve them when I am departed from this world, and complete the work of their salvation by my resurrection and ascension into heaven

after my death. I do not pray for the unbelieving, impenitent world, but for those who have embraced that most holy doctrine which thou hast taught them through me by my preaching; for those who have glorified and will glorify my name by their ministry, and who, consequently, are to be esteemed as thine own, in common with me. I am now about to leave the world in order to return to thee; but these my disciples, who continue after me, I recommend to thy Divine protection when I am gone: endue them with powers to persevere in preaching and practising the truth, and to deliver the same holy doctrines which I have given to them, that so they may remain inseparably united to me as I am to thee. So long as I have been with them in the world, I have watched over them, and kept them from falling away, both by example, preaching, and continual admonition, according to the power and authority which thou didst commit to me; nor has one of my apostles miscarried under my care, except that perfidious traitor who, as the Scripture foretold, has ungratefully conspired with my enemies to destroy me, and will perish according to his deserts. While I have continued with my disciples, I have watched over them and preserved them under mine own eye; but now, as I am going to leave the world, I beseech thee to keep and assist them by thy good Spirit, and let the expectation of their continuing under thy special care and protection be their comfort and support in my absence. The world, indeed, will persecute and hate them on this account, as my doctrine is repugnant to the lusts and affections, the passions, designs, and inclinations of worldly men: it must necessarily be that the vicious and incorrigible world will oppose and persecute them, as it has before persecuted me. I beseech thee, therefore, take them under thy particular care, to support them against the violence and oppression of an evil world. I do not desire that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but preserve them in it, to be instruments of thy word, thy glory, and to be teachers of thy truth; nor suffer them to be either destroyed by the malice and violence, or corrupted by the evil customs and opinions, of a perverse and wicked generation.

"They are of a temper and spirit very different from the current affection and common dispositions of the world, according to the example of purity which I have set before them. Do thou preserve and increase in them that moderation and candour of mind; cause them to be thoroughly affected and impressed with that true doctrine so frequently recommended to them from my mouth, so as to express it visibly in their lives and practice, and to promote it zealously in their preaching, that they may, both by word and good example, become worthy and successful ministers of my gospel. For as thou hast sent me into the world to reveal thy will

to mankind, so send I these my apostles to continue preaching the same doctrine begun by me. And the principal design of my exemplary life, constant teaching, and now voluntarily offering myself to death for it, is to sanctify and enable them to preach with success and efficacy for the salvation of men. Neither pray I for these my apostles only, but for all others who shall, by their preaching and practice, promote thy true religion, and, being converted from the world, may, by their sincere endeavours, go on to reform others, convincing the world of the excellency of their religion, and consequently enforcing men to acknowledge the truth and Divine authority thereof; for promoting which great end I have communicated to my apostles the same power and authority of doing mighty works, for the confirmation of their doctrine and the evidence of thy truth, as thou didst communicate to me, that so, by my working in them as thou hast done in me, and thus confirming with great efficacy and demonstration of the Spirit the same doctrine which I published in person, the world may, by this evidence, be convinced that I was really sent by thee, and that my disciples act by the same Divine commission.

"Holy and Almighty Father, all those whom thou hast thus given me, who have heartily embraced my doctrine and sincerely obeyed it, I desire that thou wouldst make them partakers of the same happiness with myself, and exalt them to behold the incomprehensible glory wherewith thou didst originally invest me in thy eternal love before the foundation of the world. The generality of mortals, O righteous Father, have not known thee, nor been willing to embrace and obey the revelation of thy will. But I have known thy will, and have made it known to my disciples, men of simplicity and honesty; and they have embraced and obeyed it. And I will continually make it known to them more and more, that they may grow up and improve in faith, in holiness, and in all good works, so as finally to arrive, and cause others to arrive, at that eternal happiness which is the effect of thy infinite love towards me, and, through me, towards them."

This pious and benevolent prayer being ended, Jesus and his disciples came down from the Mount of Olives into a field below, called Gethsemane, through which the brook Cedron ran, and in it, on the other side of the brook, was a garden, called the garden of Gethsemane. Here he desired his disciples to sit down while he retired to pray, taking with him Peter, James, and John, those three select disciples whom he had before chosen to be witnesses of his transfiguration, and now to be eye-witnesses of his passion, leaving the other disciples at the garden door to watch the approach of Judas and his band.

The sufferings he was on the point of undergoing were so great, that the

very prospect of them terrified him, and made him express himself in this doleful exclamation: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch." On this great occasion he sustained those grievous sorrows in his soul by which, as well as by dying on the cross, he became a sin-offering, and accomplished the redemption of mankind.

He now withdrew from them about a stone's cast, and his human nature being now overburdened beyond measure, he found it necessary to retire and pray, that if it was possible, or consistent with the salvation of the world, he might be delivered from the sufferings which were then lying on him. It was not the fear of dying on the cross which made him speak or pray in such a manner. To suppose this would infinitely degrade his character. Make his sufferings as terrible as possible, clothe them with all the aggravating circumstances of distress, yet the blessed Jesus, whose human nature was strengthened by being connected with the Divine, could not shrink at the prospect of sufferings, or betray a weakness which many of his followers, though mere men, were strangers to, having encountered more terrible deaths without the least emotion. He addresses his Divine Father with a sigh of fervent wishes that the cup might, if possible, be removed from him; (in the Greek it is, "O that thou wouldst remove this cup from me;") and having first kneeled and prayed, he fell prostrate on his face, accompanying his address with due expressions of resignation, adding immediately, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Having prayed, he returned to his disciples, and finding them asleep, he said to Peter, "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour?" Thou who so lately didst boast of thy courage and constancy in my service, canst thou so soon forget thy Master?

But in his greatest distress he never lost sight of that kind concern he had for his disciples. "Watch ye," he says, "and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Neither was he on those extraordinary occasions in the least chagrined with the offences which they had committed through frailty and human weakness; on the contrary, he was always willing to make excuses for them, alleging in their defence that the spirit truly was ready, but the flesh was weak. It seems from these particulars that he spent some considerable time in his addresses, because the disciples fell asleep in his absence, and he himself retired again to pray; for the sorrows of our Lord, continuing to increase upon him, affected him to such a degree that he retired a second time, and prayed to the same purpose, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done;" after which he returned again to them, and found them asleep, for their eyes were heavy.

He returned thus frequently to his disciples that they, by reading his

Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Carlo Dolce.)

distress in his countenance and gesture, might be witnesses of his passion, which proves that his pains were beyond description intense and complicated; for he went away the third time to pray, and notwithstanding an angel was sent from heaven to comfort and strengthen him, yet they overwhelmed him, and threw him into an agony, upon which he still continued to pray more earnestly.

But the sense of his sufferings still increasing, they strained his whole body to so violent a degree that his blood was pressed through the pores of his skin, which they pervaded, together with his sweat, and fell down in large drops on the ground. "And he left them, and went away again. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke xxii. 43, 44.) Thus did he suffer unspeakable sorrows in his soul as long as the Divine Wisdom thought proper.

At length he obtained relief, being heard on account of his perfect and entire submission to the will of his heavenly Father. "And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow." (Luke xxii. 45.) This circumstance shows how much the disciples were affected with their Master's sufferings. The sensations of grief which they felt on seeing his unspeakable distress so overpowered them that they sunk into sleep.

Our blessed Saviour for the last time came to his disciples, and seeing them asleep, he said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." (Matt. xxvi. 45, 46.) The event will soon be over which causes your sorrow: I am betrayed, and ready to be delivered up to death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The blessed Redeemer is taken by a band of soldiers at the information of the traitor Judas. Heals a wound given to the high priest's servant by Simon Peter.

JUDAS, who had often resorted to the garden of Gethsemane with the disciples of our Lord, well knew the spot, and the usual time of his Master's repairing thither, and informed the chief priests and elders that the proper time for apprehending Jesus was now come. They therefore sent a band of soldiers with him, and servants carrying lanterns and torches to show them the way, because, though it was always full moon at the Passover, the sky might be dark with clouds, and the place whither they were going was shaded with trees. At the same time, a deputation of their number accompanied the band to see that every one did his duty.

Judas, having thus received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons, for they were exceedingly anxious to secure and get him into their hands; and the soldiers having, perhaps, never seen Jesus before, found it necessary that Judas should distinguish him, and point him out to them by some particular sign.

St. Luke seems to say that Judas went before them at a little distance, to prepare them for the readier execution of their office by kissing his Master, the token they had agreed upon, that they might not mistake him, and seize a wrong person. "And he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him." (Luke xxii. 47.) Nor can the account which St. John has given us be understood on any other supposition, who says that after Judas was come up with the soldiers, Jesus went out of the

garden and asked them who it was they were seeking; to which they replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." It therefore follows that they were at a loss to know him, which they could not have been had they seen Judas kiss him: the kiss, therefore, must have been given in the garden before the band came up; nor is their agreement about the sign inconsistent with this supposition, because that confusion which commonly attends the commission of an evil action might prevent Judas from giving the sign at the proper season.

He went before the soldiers on pre-

The Betrayal. (*G. Jäger.*)

tence that he would lead them to the place, and show them the man by kissing him: however, to conceal his villainy from his Master and the disciples, he walked hastily, and, without waiting for the band, went up directly and saluted him, feigning, perhaps, to apprise him of his danger. But Jesus did not fail to convince him that he knew the meaning and intent of his salutation, saying, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Judas certainly concealed his treachery so well that Peter did not suspect him, as it is probable that he would have struck at him rather than at Malchus, the high priest's servant.

The appointed time of our Lord's sufferings being now come, he did not, as formerly, avoid his enemies; but, on the contrary, on their telling him they sought Jesus of Nazareth, he replied, "I am he," thereby insinuating to them that he was willing to put himself into their hands. At the same time, to show them that they could not apprehend him without his own consent, he in an extraordinary manner exerted his Divine power: he made the whole band fall back, and threw them to the ground. "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground." But the soldiers and the Jews, imagining, perhaps, that they had been thrown down by some demon or evil spirit with whom the Jews said he was in confederacy, advanced towards him a second time. "Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he," expressing again his willingness to fall into their hands. "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." If your business be with me alone, suffer my disciples to pass; for the party had surrounded them also. He seems to have made this request to the soldiers, that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake: "Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none." For as he always proportions the trials of people to their strength, so here he took care that the disciples should escape the storm which none but himself could sustain.

At length, some of the soldiers, more daring than the rest, rudely caught Jesus, and bound him, upon which Peter drew his sword, and smote off the ear of the high priest's servant, who probably was showing greater forwardness than the rest in this business. "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus." (John xviii. 10, &c.) The enraged disciple was on the point of singly attacking the whole band, when Jesus ordered him to sheathe the sword, telling him that his unseasonable and imprudent defence might prove the occasion of his destruction. "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."(Matt. xxvi. 52.) He told him, likewise, that it implied both a distrust of God, who can always employ a variety of means for the safety of his people, and also his ignorance in the Scriptures. "Thinkest thou," said he, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.)

The word "legion" was a Roman military term, being the name which they gave to a body of five or six thousand men; wherefore, in regard that the band which now surrounded them was a Roman cohort, our Lord might make use of this term by way of contrast, to show what an inconsiderable thing a cohort was in comparison with the force he could summon to his assistance—more than twelve legions, not of soldiers, but of angels. He yet was tenderly inclined to prevent any bad consequences which might have flowed from Peter's rashness, by healing the servant, and adding, in his rebuke to him, a declaration of his willingness to suffer. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.)

The circumstance of his healing the ear of Malchus by touching it evidently implies that no wound or distemper was incurable in the hand of Jesus, neither was any injury so great that he could not forgive. It seems somewhat surprising that this evident miracle did not make an impression upon the chief priests, especially as our Lord put them in mind, at the same time, of his other miracles; for having first said, "Suffer ye thus far, he touched his ear, and healed him;" adding, "Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Luke xxii. 51—53.) They had kept at a distance during the attack, but drew near when they understood that Jesus was in their power; for they were proof against all conviction, being obstinately bent on putting him to death. And the disciples, when they saw their Master in the hands of his enemies, forsook him and fled, according to his prediction, notwithstanding they might have followed him without any danger, as the priests had no design against them. "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." Then the band and the captain and officers took Jesus, and bound him. But it was not the cord which held him; his immense charity was by far a stronger band. He could have broken those weak ties and exerted his Divinity in a more wonderful manner; he could have stricken them all dead with as much ease as he had before thrown them on the ground; but he patiently submitted to this, as to every other indignity which they pleased to offer him, so meek was he under the greatest injuries. Having thus secured him, they led him away. "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." This, perhaps, was the proprietor of the garden, who, being awakened with the noise, came out with the linen cloth in which he had been lying cast round his naked body; and

having a respect for Jesus, followed him, forgetting the dress he was in.

They first led him to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. Annas, having himself discharged the office of high priest, was consequently a person of distinguished character, which, together with his relation to the high priest, made him worthy of the respect they now paid him. But he refused singly to meddle in the affair; they therefore carried Jesus to Caiaphas himself, at whose palace the chief priests, elders, and scribes were assembled, having lain there all night to see the issue of their stratagem. This Caiaphas was he that advised the council to put Jesus to death, even admitting he was innocent, for the safety of the whole Jewish nation. He seems to have enjoyed the sacerdotal dignity during the whole course of Pilate's government in Judea; for he was advanced by Valerius Graccus, Pilate's predecessor, and was divested of it by Vitellius, governor of Syria, after he had deposed Pilate from his procuratorship.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Fulfilment of our Lord's prediction concerning Peter.

THE apprehending of their dear Master could not but strike his disciples with horror and amazement. Though he had forewarned them of that event, such was their consternation that they fled different ways: some of them, however, recovering out of the panic that had seized them, followed the band at a distance to see what the issue would be. Of this number were Peter and another disciple, whom John has mentioned without giving his name, and who, therefore, is supposed to have been John himself. This disciple, being acquainted at the high priest's, got admittance for himself first, and soon after for Peter, who had come with him. "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down among them." The maid-servant who kept the door, concluding Peter to be a disciple also, followed him after to the fire, and looking earnestly at him, charged him with the supposed crime. "Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?"

This blunt attack threw Peter into such confusion that he flatly denied his having any connection with Jesus, replying, "I am not," and adding, "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest." As if he had said, I do not understand any reason for your asking me such a

question. Thus the very apostle who had before acknowledged his Master to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God, who was honoured with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and had so confidently boasted of fortitude and firm attachment to him in the greatest dangers, proved an arrant deserter of his cause upon trial. His shameful fears were altogether inexcusable, as the enemy who attacked him was one of the weaker sex, and the terror of the charge was in a great measure taken off by the insinuation made in it that John was likewise known to be Christ's disciple; for, as he was known at the high priest's, he was consequently known in that character. "Art thou not also one of this man's disciples?" Art thou not one of them, as well as he who is sitting with you? Nothing can account for this conduct of Peter but the confusion and panic which had seized him on this occasion. As his inward perturbation must have appeared in his countenance and gesture, he did not choose to stay long with the servants at the fire. He went out, therefore, into the porch, where he was a little concealed. "And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew," namely, for the first time. "And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he again denied it with an oath, saying, I know not the man," adding perjury to lying.

After Peter had been thus attacked without doors, he thought proper to return and mix with the crowd at the fire. "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself." From this circumstance we may conclude that the ensuing was the third denial, and that Peter left the porch where the second denial happened, and was come again into the hall. Here "one of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew."

The words of Malchus's kinsman, bringing to Peter's remembrance what he had done to that slave, threw him into such a panic, that when those who stood by repeated the charge, he impudently denied it: "he even began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak." For, when they heard Peter deny the charge, they supported it by an argument drawn from the accent with which he pronounced his answer. Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. So that, being pressed on all sides, to give his lie the better colour, he profaned the name of God by imprecating the bitterest curses on himself if he was telling a falsehood. Perhaps he hoped, by these acts of impiety, to convince them effectually that he was not a disciple of the holy Jesus.

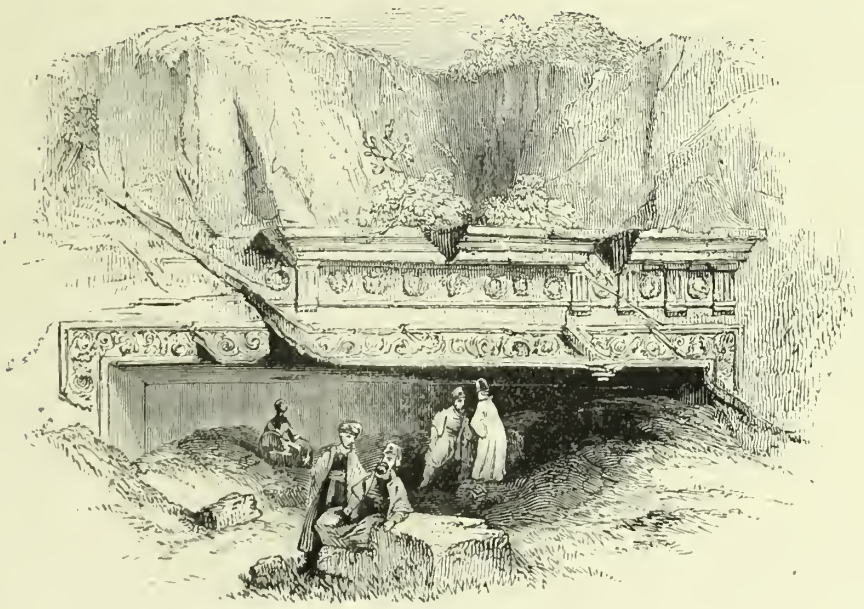
Thus the apostle denied his Master three distinct times with oaths and asseverations, totally forgetting the

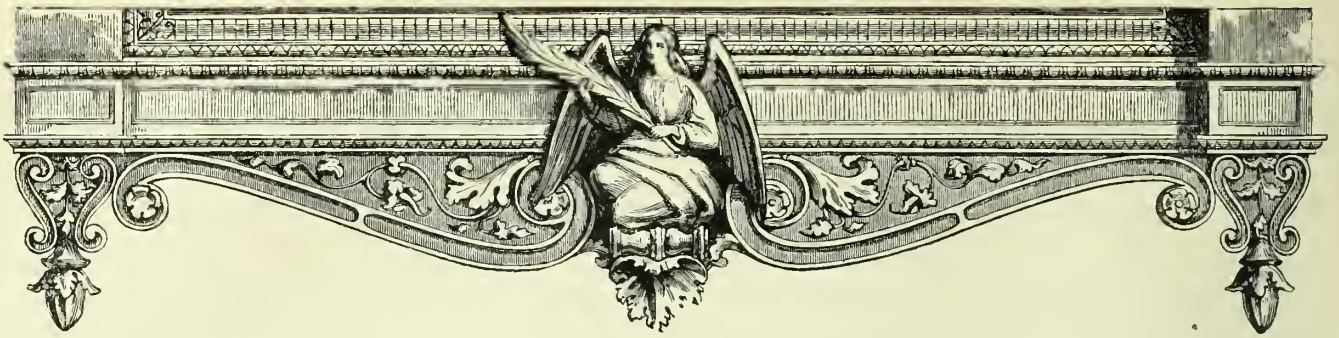
vehement protestations he had made, a few hours before, that he would never deny him. He was permitted to fall in this manner to teach us two lessons: first, that the strongest resolutions formed in our own strength cannot withstand the torrent of temptation; secondly, that the true disciples of Christ, though they fall, should be brought to a conviction of their sin; for he no sooner denied his Master the third time than the cock crew, and awakened in him the first conviction of his sin. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Peter denying Christ. (*G. Jäger.*)

St. Luke is the only evangelist who has preserved this beautiful circumstance of Christ turning and looking on Peter. The members of the council who sat on Jesus were placed at the upper end of the hall; in the other were the servants, with Peter, at the fire; so that Jesus, being probably placed on some eminence, that his judges, who were numerous, might see and hear him, could easily look over towards Peter, and observe him denying him, and in passionate terms, loud enough to be heard, perhaps, over all the place. The look pierced him, and, with the crowing of the cock, brought his Master's prediction fresh into his mind. He was stung with deep remorse; and being unable to contain himself, he

covered his face with his garment to conceal the confusion he was in, and going out into the porch, wept very bitterly. All this passed while the priests examined Jesus with many taunts and revilings; and while the most zealous of Christ's disciples was denying him with oaths and imprecations, the others insulted him in the most inhuman manner. Thus a complication of injuries, insults, and indignities was at one time heaped upon the blessed Redeemer, the meek and mild Jesus, in order to fulfil the prophecies concerning him, and teach his followers a lesson of humility.





CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Saviour of the World is arraigned at the bar of the Sanhedrim, and tried by the Jewish Council.

WHEN the band of soldiers arrived at the high priest's with Jesus, they found there all the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders assembled. "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council. And the high priest asked Jesus of his disciples, and his doctrine." He inquired of him what his disciples were; for what end he had gathered them; whether it was to make himself a king; and what the doctrine was which he taught them. In these questions there was a great deal of art; for, as the crime laid to our Saviour's charge was that he had set up for the Messiah and deluded the people, they expected he would claim that dignity in his presence, and so would, on his own confession, have condemned him without any further process. This was unfair, as it was artful and ensnaring. To oblige a prisoner on his trial to confess what might take away his life was a very inequitable method of proceeding, and Jesus expressed his opinion thereof with very good reason, and complained of it, bidding them prove what they had laid to his charge by witnesses. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them; behold, they know what I said." It was greatly to the honour of our blessed Redeemer that all his actions were done in public, under the eye even of his enemies, because, had he been carrying on any imposture, the lovers of goodness and truth had thus abundant opportunities of detecting him with propriety. He therefore, in his defence, appealed to

that part of his character, yet his answer was construed disrespectfully; for "when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?" to which he meekly replied, with the greatest serenity, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Show me—prove before this court wherein my crime consists, or record it in the evidence on the face of my trial; which if you cannot, how can you answer this inhuman treatment to a defenceless prisoner, standing on his trial before the world, and in open court?

Thus Jesus became an example of his own precept, "And if a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left also," (Matt. v. 44,) bearing the greatest injuries with a patience that could not be provoked.

When the council found that Jesus declined answering the questions whereby they expected to have drawn from him an acknowledgment of his being the Messiah, they proceeded to examine many witnesses to prove his having assumed that character, as they considered such a pretension as blasphemy in his mouth, who, being only a man according to their opinion, could not, without the highest affront to the Divine Majesty, pretend to the title of the Son of God, as it belonged only to the Messiah.

But in this examination they acted like interested and enraged persecutors rather than impartial judges, forming their questions in the most artful manner, in order, if possible, to draw expressions from them which they might pervert into suspicions of guilt, as some foundation for condemning Jesus, who had so long and faithfully laboured for their salvation.

Their witnesses, however, disappointed them, some of them disagreeing in their story, and others mentioning things of no manner of importance. At last two persons agreed in their depositions, namely, in hearing him say that he was able to destroy the temple of God, and to raise it in three days. But this testimony was absolutely false; for our great Redeemer never said he could destroy and build the temple of Jerusalem in three days, as they affirmed. It is true that after banishing the traders from the temple, when the Jews desired to know by what authority he undertook to make such a reformation, he referred them to the miracle of his resurrection, bidding them "destroy this temple" (pointing probably to his body), "and in three days he would raise it up." The witnesses, therefore, either through malice or ignorance, perverted his answer into an affirmation that he was able to destroy and build the magnificent temple of Jerusalem in three days; and the judges considered this assertion as blasphemy, because it could be only done by the Divine Power.

Our Saviour made no reply to the evidence that was produced against

him, which greatly provoked the high priest, who, supposing that he intended by his silence to put an affront on the council, rose from his seat, and with great perturbation demanded the reason for such remarkable conduct. "Answerest thou nothing?" said he: "behold how many things they witness against thee." And some of the council added, "Art thou the Christ?" to which our blessed Saviour answered, If I should tell you plainly you would not believe me; and if I should demonstrate it to you by the most evident and undeniable arguments, ye would neither be convinced nor let me go.

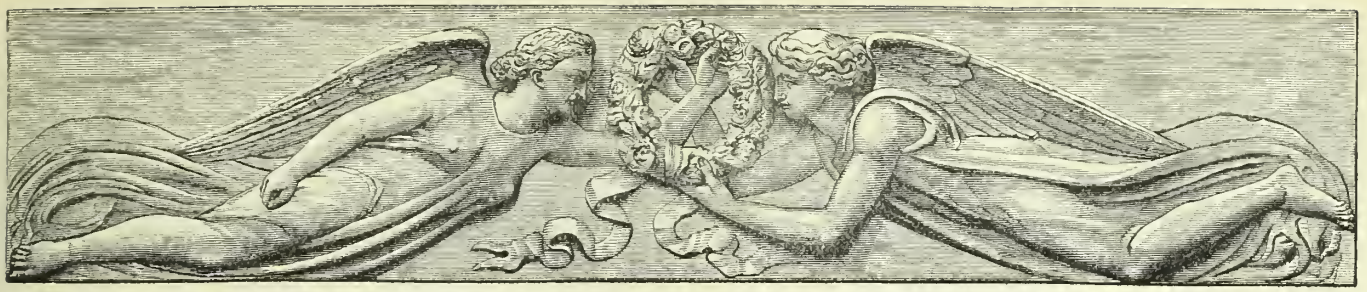
The high priest, finding all his attempts to trepan our Saviour in vain, said to him, I adjure you solemnly by the dreadful and tremendous name of God, in whose presence you stand, that you tell us plainly and truly whether thou art the Messiah, the Son of God.

The consequence attending his confession of the truth did not intimidate the blessed Jesus; for, being adjured by the chief magistrate, he immediately confessed the charge, adding, Ye shall shortly see a convincing evidence of this truth in that wonderful and unparalleled destruction which I will send upon the Jewish nation; in the quick and powerful progress which the gospel shall make over the earth; and, finally, in my glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven at the last day—the sign you have so often demanded in confirmation of my mission. Upon our blessed Saviour's making this answer, a number of them cried out at once, "Art thou the Son of God?" to which our great Redeemer replied, "Ye say that I am"—a manner of speaking among the Jews, which expressed a plain and strong affirmation of the thing expressed.

When the high priest heard this second assertion he rent his clothes with great indignation, and said unto the council, Why need we trouble ourselves to seek for any more witnesses? Ye yourselves—nay, this whole assembly—are witnesses that he hath spoken manifest and notorious blasphemy. What think ye? to which they all replied that, for assuming to himself the character of the Messiah, he deserved to be put to death.

Then began the servants and common people to fall upon him as a man already condemned, spitting upon him, buffeting him, and offering him all manner of rudeness and indignities. They blindfolded him; and some of the council, in order to ridicule him for having pretended to be the great prophet, bid him exercise his prophetical gift in declaring who had smote him.

Such was the treatment of the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, which, though unworthy of his character, he bore with patience and resignation, leaving his people an example to follow his steps, and submit to the will of God in all things, without murmuring at any of the dispensations of his providence.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

Our blessed Saviour is carried before the Roman Governor. The traitor Judas becomes his own executioner. Pilate publicly acquits Jesus, and refers his case to the decision of Herod.

THE blessed Jesus being thus condemned by the unanimous voice of the grand assembly, it was resolved to carry him before the governor, that he likewise might pass sentence on him. The Roman governors of Judea generally resided at Cæsarea, but at the great feasts they came up to Jerusalem to prevent or suppress tumults, and to administer justice, it being a custom for the Roman governors of provinces to visit the principal towns under their jurisdiction on this latter account. Pilate, being accordingly come to Jerusalem some time before the feast, had been informed of the great foment among the rulers, and the true character of the person on whose account it was raised, for he entertained a just notion of it—"he knew that for envy they had delivered him." He knew the cause of their envy, was impressed with a favourable opinion of Jesus, and wished, if possible, to deliver him from his vile persecutors.

Early in the morning the Jewish council brought Jesus to the hall of judgment, or governor's palace. They themselves, however, went not into the hall, but stood without, lest they should be defiled, and rendered incapable of eating the Passover.

Now Judas Iscariot, who had delivered his Master into the hands of the council, finding his project turned out very differently from what he expected, was filled with the deepest remorse for what he had done. He saw all his golden dreams of temporal honours and advantages sunk at once to nothing. He saw his kind, his indulgent Master condemned, and forsaken by all his followers. He saw all this, and determined to make all the satisfaction in his power for the crime he had committed.

Accordingly, he came and confessed

openly his sin before the chief priests and elders, offered them the money they had given him to commit it, and earnestly wished he could recall the fatal transaction of the preceding night.

It seems he thought this was the most public testimony he could possibly give of his Master's innocence and his own repentance. I have, said he, committed a most horrid crime in betraying an innocent man to death.

But this moving speech of Judas had no effect on the callous hearts of the Jewish rulers. They affirmed that however he might think the prisoner innocent, and for that reason had sinned in bringing the sentence of death upon his head, they were not to blame, because they knew him to be a blasphemer who deserved to die. "What is that to us?" said they; "see thou to that." Nay, they even refused to take back the money they had given him as a reward for performing the base act of betraying his Master.

The deepest remorse now seized upon the wretched Judas, and his soul was agitated by all the horrors of despair. The innocence and benevolence of his Master, the many favours he himself had received from him, and the many kind offices he had done for the sons and daughters of affliction, crowded at once into his mind, and rendered his torment intolerable. Racked with these agonising passions, and unable to support the misery, he threw down the wages of his iniquity in the temple, and, confessing at the same time his own sin and the innocence of his Master, went away in despair, and hanged himself.

Thus perished Judas Iscariot, the traitor, a miserable example of the fatal influence of covetousness, and a standing monument of Divine vengeance, to deter future generations from acting in opposition to the dictates of conscience through a love of the things of this world, for which this wretched mortal betrayed his Master, his Friend, his Saviour, and accumulated such a load of guilt on himself as sunk his soul into the lowest pit of perdition.

The pieces of silver cast down by Judas were gathered up and delivered to the priests, who, thinking it unlawful to put them into the treasury because they were the wages of a traitor, agreed to lay them out in purchasing the potter's field, and to make it a common burial-place for strangers.

This the evangelist tells us was done that a particular prophecy relating to the Messiah might be fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." This prophecy is found in Zechariah; but, by a mistake of some copyist, the word Jeremiah is inserted in the Greek manuscripts of St. Matthew's Gospel, unless we suppose, with the learned

Grotius, that this remarkable prophecy was first made by Jeremiah, and afterwards repeated, by the immediate direction of the Spirit, by Zechariah, and that therefore the evangelist has only ascribed the prophecy to its original author. But, however this be, the prophecy is remarkable, and was remarkably fulfilled. And the evangelist, by thus appealing to a public transaction, puts the truth of this part of the history beyond all manner of exception.

Jeremiah. (*Michel Angelo.*)

I have already observed that the chief priests and elders refused to go themselves into the judgment-hall, lest they should contract some pollutions in the house of an heathen, which would have rendered them unfit for eating the Passover. The same reason also hindered them from entering the governor's palace on other festivals, when that magistrate attended in order to administer justice. A kind of structure was therefore erected adjoining to the palace, which served instead of a tribunal or judgment-seat. This structure, called in the Hebrew Gabbatha, was finely paved with small pieces of marble of different colours, being always exposed to the weather. One side of this structure joined to the palace, and a door was made in the wall, through which the governor passed to this tribunal. By this contrivance the people might stand round the tribunal in the open air, hear and see the governor when he spoke to them from the pavement, and observe the whole

administration of justice, without danger of being defiled either by him or any of his retinue.

Before this tribunal the great Redeemer of mankind was brought, and the priests and elders having taken their places round the pavement, the governor ascended the judgment-seat, and asked them what accusation they brought against the prisoner. Though nothing could be more natural than for the governor to ask this question, yet the Jews thought themselves highly affronted by it, and haughtily answered, If he had not been a very great and extraordinary malefactor, we should not have given you this trouble at all, much less at so unseasonable an hour.

Pilate then examined Jesus, and finding he had not been guilty either of rebellion or sedition, but that he was accused of particulars relating to the religion and customs of the Jews, grew angry and said, "What are these things to me? Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your own law;" plainly insinuating that in his opinion the crime they laid to the prisoner's charge was not of a capital nature, and that such punishment as they were permitted by Cæsar to inflict was adequate to any misdemeanour that Jesus was charged with. But this proposal of the Roman governor was absolutely refused by the Jewish priests and elders, because it condemned their whole proceeding, and therefore they answered, We have no power to put any one to death, as this man certainly deserves, who has attempted not only to make innovations in our religion, but also to set up himself for a king.

This eagerness of the Jews to get Jesus condemned by the Roman governor, who often sentenced malefactors to be crucified, tended to fulfil the saying of our great Redeemer, who during the course of his ministry had often mentioned what kind of death he was, by the counsel of Omnipotence, appointed to die. Pilate, finding it impossible to prevent a tumult unless he proceeded to try Jesus, ascended again the judgment-seat, and commanded his accusers to produce their accusations against him. Accordingly, they accused him of seditious practices, affirming that he had used every method in his power to dissuade the people from paying taxes to Cæsar, pretending that he himself was the Messiah, the great King of the Jews so long expected. But they brought no proof of this assertion. They only insinuated that they had already convicted him of this crime, which was absolutely false. Pilate, however, asked him, Is it true what these men lay to your charge, that you have indeed attempted to set up yourself as king of the Jews? to which Jesus replied, Have you ever, during your stay in this province, heard anything of me that gave you reason to suspect me guilty of secret practices and seditious designs against the government? or do you found your question only on the present clamour and tumult that are raised against me? If this be the case, be

very careful lest you be imposed on merely by the ambiguity of a word; for to be king of the Jews is not to erect a temporal throne in opposition to that of Cæsar, but a thing of a very different nature: the kingdom of the Messiah is in the heavenly Canaan.

To which Pilate replied, Am I a Jew? Can I tell what your expectations are, and in what superstitious sense you understand these words? The rulers and chiefs of your own people, who are the most proper judges of these particulars, have brought you before me as a riotous and seditious person: if this be not the truth, let me know what is, and the crime thou hast been guilty of.

Jesus answered, I have indeed a kingdom, and this kingdom I have professed to establish. But then it is not of this world, nor have my endeavours to establish it any tendency to cause disturbances in the government; for, had that been the case, my servants would have fought for me, and not suffered me to have fallen into the hands of the Jews. But I tell you plainly, my kingdom is wholly spiritual. I reign in the hearts of my people, and subdue their wills and affections into a conformity to the will of God.

You acknowledge, then, in general, answered Pilate, that you have pretended to be a king? to which the blessed Jesus replied, In the sense I have told you I have declared, and do now declare, myself to be a king. For this very end I was born, and for this purpose I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; and whosoever sincerely loves and is always ready to embrace the truth will hear my testimony, and be convinced by it. Pilate answered, What is truth? and immediately went out to the Jews, and said unto them, I have again examined this man, but can find him guilty of no fault which, according to the Roman law, is worthy of death.

This generous declaration made by the governor of the innocence of our blessed Saviour had no effect on the superstitious and bigoted Jews. They even persisted in their accusations with more vehemence than before, affirming that he had attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee. "He stirreth up," said they, "the people, beginning from Galilee to this place." Jesus, however, made no answer at all to this heavy charge. Nay, he continued silent, notwithstanding the governor himself expressly required him to speak in his own defence. A conduct so extraordinary, in such circumstances, astonished Pilate exceedingly; for he had great reason to be persuaded of the innocence of our dear Redeemer. The truth is, he was altogether ignorant of the Divine counsel by which the whole affair was directed.

There were many reasons which induced the blessed Jesus not to make a public defence. He came into the world purely to redeem lost and undone mankind by offering up himself a sacrifice to appease the wrath of his Almighty Father; but had he

pleaded with his usual force, the people had, in all probability, been induced to ask his release, and consequently his death had been prevented. Besides, the gross falsehood of the accusation, known to all the inhabitants of Galilee, rendered any reply absolutely needless.

In the meantime the chief priests continued to accuse him with great noise and tumult; and the meek and humble Jesus still continuing mute, Pilate spoke again to him, saying, Wilt thou continue to make no defence? Dost thou not hear how vehemently these men accuse thee?

But Pilate, recollecting what the chief priests had said with regard to a sedition in Galilee, asked if Jesus came out of that country, and on being informed he did, he immediately ordered him to be carried to Herod, who was also then at Jerusalem.

The governor supposed that Herod, in whose dominions the sedition was said to have been raised, must be a much better judge of the affair than himself. Besides, his being a Jew rendered him more expert in the religion of his own country, and gave him greater influence over the chief priests and elders: he therefore considered him as the most proper person to prevail on the Jewish council to desist from their cruel prosecution. But if, contrary to all human probability, he should, at their solicitation, condemn Jesus, Pilate hoped to escape the guilt and infamy of putting an innocent person to death. He might also propose, by this action, to regain Herod's friendship, which he had formerly lost by encroaching, in all probability, on his privileges.

But however that may be, or whatever motive induced Pilate to send our great Redeemer to Herod, the latter greatly rejoiced at this opportunity of seeing Jesus, hoping to have the pleasure of beholding him perform some great miracle.

In this he was, however, mistaken; for, as Herod had apostatised from the doctrine of John the Baptist, to which he was once a convert, and had even put his teacher to death, the blessed Jesus, however liberal of his miracles to the sons and daughters of affliction, would not work them to gratify the curiosity of a tyrant, nor even answer one of the many questions he proposed to him.

Herod, finding himself thus disappointed, ordered our blessed Saviour to be clothed with an old robe, resembling in colour those worn by kings, and permitted his attendants to insult him.

From Herod's dressing him in this manner, it evidently appears that the chief priests and elders had accused him of nothing but his having assumed the character of the Messiah, for the affront put upon him was plainly in derision of that pretension.

The other head of accusation—namely, his having attempted to raise a sedition in Galilee on account of tribute paid to Cæsar—they did not dare to mention, as Herod could not fail of knowing it to be a gross and

malicious falsehood. And no crime worthy of death being laid to his charge, Herod sent him again to Pilate. It seems that though he was displeased with the great Redeemer of mankind for refusing to work a miracle before him, yet he did not think proper to be unjust to him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Roman Governor, for want of evidence, proposes to acquit and release Jesus three several times; but at length, at the pressing instigation of the inveterate Jews, he condemns and delivers him up.

THE Roman governors, in order to acquire popular applause, used generally, at the feast of the Passover, to release a prisoner nominated by the people. At this feast there was one in prison named Barabbas, who, at the head of numbers of rebels, had made an insurrection in the city, and committed murder during the confusion.

The multitude, being now again assembled before the governor's palace, began to call aloud on him to perform the annual office of mercy customary at that festival.

Pilate, glad of this opportunity, told them that he was very willing to grant the favour they desired, and asked them whether they would have Barabbas or Jesus released unto them. But, without waiting for an answer, he offered to release Jesus, knowing that the chief priests had delivered him through envy, especially as Herod had not found him guilty of the crimes laid to his charge.

While these particulars were transacting, Pilate received a message from his wife, then with him at Jerusalem, and who had that morning been informed of something in a dream which gave her great uneasiness. The dream had so great an effect on this Roman lady that she could not rest till she had sent an account of it to her husband, who was then sitting on the tribunal in the pavement, and begged him to have no hand in the death of the righteous person he was then judging.

The people had not yet determined whether they would have Jesus or Barabbas released to them; therefore, when Pilate received the message from his wife, he called the chief priests and rulers together, and in the hearing of the multitude made a speech to them, in which he gave them an account of the examination

Arch in the Via Dolorosa

which Jesus had undergone both at his own and Herod's tribunal, declaring that in both courts it had turned out honourably to his character, for which reason he proposed to them that he should be the object of the people's favour.

Pilate did the priests the honour of desiring to know their inclinations in particular, perhaps, with a design to soften their stony hearts, and, if possible, to move them for once to pity an unhappy and innocent man. But he was persuaded that, if pity was absolutely banished from their callous breasts, his proposal would have been acceptable to the people, who he expected would embrace the first opportunity of declaring in his favour. Yet in this he was disappointed. They cried out all at once, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas."

Apostate mortals! a few hours ago ye listened with rapture to his heavenly discourses, beheld with transport the many salutary miracles wrought by this benevolent Son of the Most High, and earnestly importuned him to take possession of the throne and sceptre of David. Now nothing will satiate your infernal malice but his precious blood! But remember, ye miscreants! ye monsters in the human form! that this same Jesus, whom ye beheld with such contempt before the tribunal of the Roman governor; this Jesus, whose blood your infernal mouths so loudly requested, shall one day come in the clouds of heaven to take vengeance on his enemies. And how will ye be able to bear the sight of his appearance, when the very heavens themselves will melt at his presence, the sun become black as sackcloth of hair, the moon be turned into blood, and the stars start from their spheres? How will ye then repent of your unjust demand, and call to the mountains and rocks to fall on you, and hide you from the presence of the immaculate Lamb of God, the tremendous Judge of the whole earth!

Pilate himself was astonished at this determination of the multitude, and repeated his question, for he could hardly believe what he had himself heard. But, on their again declaring that they desired Barabbas might be released, he asked them what he should do with Jesus, which is called Christ. As if he had said, You demand that Barabbas should be released; but what shall I then do with Jesus? You cannot surely have me to crucify him whom so many of you have acknowledged as your Messiah? "But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Then Pilate saith unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him."

They were so resolutely determined to have him destroyed that, notwithstanding the governor urged them again and again to desire his release, declared his innocence, and offered several times to dismiss him, they would not hear it, uttering their rage sometimes in hollow, distant, inar-

The Crown of Thorns. (*L. Carracci.*)

ticulate murmurs, and sometimes in furious outcries : to such a pitch were their passions raised by the craft and artful insinuations of their priests.

Pilate, finding it therefore in vain to struggle with their prejudices, called for water, and washed his hands before the multitude, crying out at the same time that the prisoner had no fault, and that he himself was innocent of his blood.

By this action and declaration Pilate seems to have intended to make an impression on the Jewish populace by complying with the institution of Moses, which orders, in case of an unknown murder, the elders of the nearest city to wash their hands publicly, and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood." And in allusion to this law the Psalmist says, "I will wash mine hands in innocence." According, therefore, to the Jewish rites, Pilate made the most solemn and public declaration of the innocence of our dear Redeemer, and of his resolution of having no hand in his death.

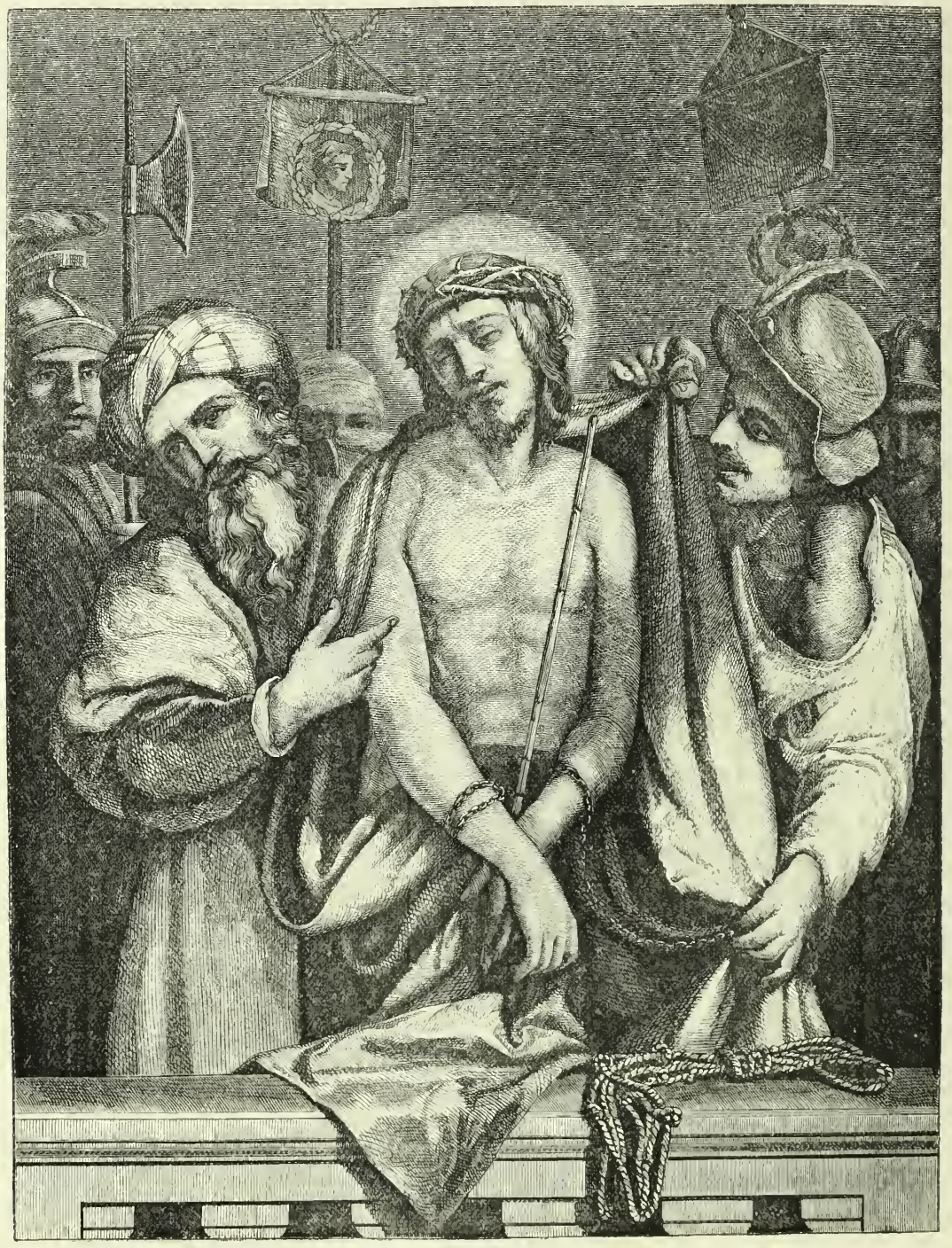
But, notwithstanding the solemnity of this declaration, the Jews continued inflexible, and cried out with one voice, "His blood be on us and on our children." Dreadful imprecation! It shocks humanity: an imprecation which brought on them the dreadful vengeance of Omnipotence, and is still a heavy burden on that perfidious people.

The governor, finding it impossible to alter their choice, released unto them Barabbas; and as it was the general practice of the Romans to scourge those criminals they condemned to be crucified, Pilate ordered the blessed Jesus to be scourged before he delivered him to the soldiers to be put to death.

The soldiers, having scourged Jesus, and received orders to crucify him, carried him into the prætorium, or common hall, where they added the shame of disgrace to the bitterness of his punishment; for, sore as he was by reason of the stripes they had given him, they dressed him in a purple robe, in derision of his being king of the Jews. Having dressed him in this robe of mock majesty, they put a reed in his hand instead of a sceptre, and after plaiting a wreath of thorns, they put it on his head for a crown, forcing it down in so rude a manner that his temples were torn and his face besmeared with his most precious blood. To the Son of God in this condition the rude soldiers bowed the knee, pretending to do it out of respect, but at the same time gave him severe blows on his head, which drove the prickles of the wreath afresh into his temples, and then spat on him to express their highest contempt.

The governor, whose office obliged him to be present at this shocking scene of inhumanity, was ready to burst with grief. The sight of an innocent and virtuous man treated with such shocking barbarity raised in his breast the most painful sensations of pity; and though he had given sentence that it should be as

the Jews desired, and had delivered our dear Redeemer to the soldiers to be crucified, he was persuaded that if he showed him to the people in that condition, they must relent, and petition him to let him go. Filled



The Purple Robe. (*Cigoli.*)

with this thought, he resolved to carry him out, and exhibit to their view a spectacle capable of softening the most envenomed, obdurate, enraged enemy. And in order to render the impression still more poignant, he went out himself, and said unto them, Though I have sen-

tenced this man to die, and have scourged him as one that is to be crucified, yet I once more bring him before you, that I may again testify how fully I am persuaded of his innocence, and that ye may yet have an opportunity of saving his life.

As soon as the governor had finished his speech, Jesus appeared on the pavement, his hair, his face, his shoulders all clotted with blood, and the purple robe bedaubed with spittle. And that the sight of Jesus in this distress might make the greater

"Behold the man!" (*G. Jäger.*)

impression on the people, Pilate, while he was coming forward, cried out, "Behold the man!" As if he had said, Will nothing make you relent? Have ye lost all the feelings of humanity and bowels of compassion? Can you bear to see the innocent, a son of Abraham, thus injured?

But all this was to no purpose. The priests, whose rage and malice had extinguished not only the sentiments of justice and feelings of pity natural to the human heart, but also

that love which countrymen bear for each other, no sooner saw Jesus than they began to fear the fickle populace might relent; and therefore, laying decency aside, they led the way for the multitude, crying out with all their might, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

Pilate, vexed to see the Jewish rulers thus obstinately bent on the destruction of a person from whom they had nothing to fear that was dangerous either with regard to their church or state, passionately told them that if they would have him crucified they must do it themselves, because he would not suffer his people to murder a man who was guilty of no crime.

But this they also refused, thinking it dishonourable to receive permission to punish a person who had been more than once publicly declared innocent by his judge. Besides, they considered with themselves that the governor might afterwards have called it sedition, as the permission had been extorted from him. Accordingly they told him that even though none of the things alleged against the prisoner were true, he had committed such a crime in the presence of the council itself as by their law deserved the most ignominious death. He had spoken blasphemy, calling himself the Son of God—a title which no mortal could assume without the highest degree of guilt. "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

When Pilate heard that Jesus called himself the Son of God his fear was increased. Knowing the obstinacy of the Jews in all matters of religion, he was afraid they would make a tumult in earnest; or perhaps he was himself more afraid than ever to take away his life, because he suspected it might be true. He doubtless remembered the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus, and therefore suspected that he really was the Son of God; for it is well known that the religion which the governor professed directed him to acknowledge the existence of demigods and heroes, or men descended from the gods. Nay, the heathens believed that their gods themselves sometimes appeared upon earth in the form of men.

Reflections of this kind induced Pilate to go again into the judgment-hall, and ask Jesus from what father he sprang, and from what country he came. But our blessed Saviour gave him no answer, lest the governor should reverse his sentence, and absolutely refuse to crucify him.

Pilate marvelled greatly at this silence, and said unto Jesus, Why dost thou refuse to answer me? You cannot be ignorant that I am invested with absolute power either to release or crucify you; to which Jesus answered, I well know that you are Cæsar's servant, and accountable to him for your management. I forgive you any injury which, contrary to your inclination, the popular fury constrains you to do unto me. Thou

hast thy power from above, from the emperor; for which cause the Jewish high priest, who hath put me into thy hands, and, by pretending that I am Cæsar's enemy, forces thee to condemn me, or, if thou refusest, will accuse thee as negligent of the emperor's interests—he is more guilty than thou. "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

This sweet and modest answer made such an impression on Pilate that he went out to the people, and declared his intention of releasing Jesus, whether they gave their consent or not, upon which the chief priests and rulers of Israel cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." If thou releasest the prisoner, who hath set himself up for a king, and endeavoured to raise a rebellion in the country, thou art unfaithful to the interest of the emperor, thy master. This argument was weighty, and shook Pilate's resolution to the very basis. He was terrified at the thought of being accused to Tiberius, who in all affairs of government always suspected the worst, and punished the most minute crimes relative thereto with death.

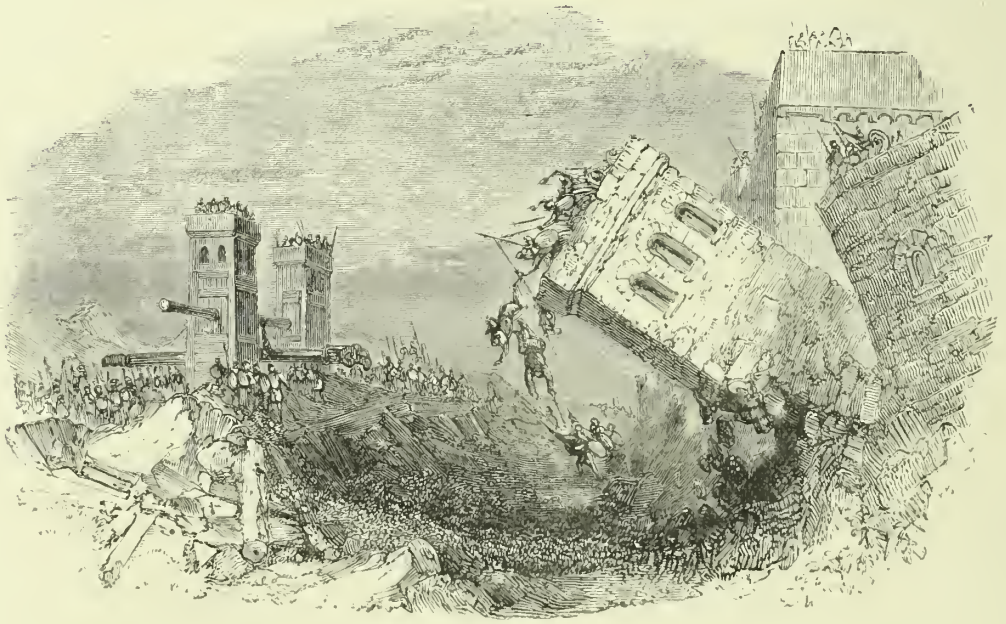
The governor, being thus constrained to yield contrary to his inclination, was very angry with the priests for stirring up the people to such a pitch of madness, and determined to affront them.

He therefore brought Jesus out a second time to the pavement, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns; and, pointing to him, said, "Behold your King!" ridiculing the national expectation of a Messiah.

This sarcastical expression stung them to the quick, and they cried out, "Away with him, away with him! Crucify him!" to which Pilate answered, with the same mocking air, "Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar." Thus did they publicly renounce their hope of the Messiah, which the whole economy of their religion had been calculated to cherish: they also publicly acknowledged their subjection to the Romans, and consequently condemned themselves when they afterwards rebelled against the emperor.

I cannot help observing here that the great unwillingness of the governor to pass sentence of death upon Jesus has something in it very remarkable; for, from the character of Pilate, as drawn by the Roman historians themselves, he seems to have been far from possessing any true principle of virtue. To what, then, could it be owing that so wicked a man should so steadily adhere to the cause of innocence, which he defended with uncommon bravery, and perhaps would never have abandoned it, had it not been forced by the threatenings of the chief priests and rulers of Israel? And when he did yield, and passed sentence of death upon our dear Redeemer, why did he still declare him innocent? This can certainly be attributed to no other cause

than to the secret but powerful direction of the providence of the Almighty, who intended that, at the same time his Son was condemned and executed as a malefactor, his innocence should be made to appear in the most public manner, and by the most authentic evidence, even that of the judge himself. It was the power of the Almighty that set bounds to the inveterate malice and fury of the Jews; that would not suffer them to stain the innocence of the blessed Jesus, at the same time they deprived him of his life; but said to their boisterous malice, as he had before said to the foaming billows of the ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."



Christ bearing his Cross

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The innocent, immaculate Redeemer is led forth to Mount Calvary, and there ignominiously crucified between two notorious malefactors. Reviled by the spectators. A phenomenon appears on the important occasion. Our Lord addresses his friends from the cross, and gives up the ghost.

THE solemn, the awful period now approached when the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, was to undergo the oppressive burden of our sins upon the tree, and submit unto death, even the death of the cross, that we might live at the right hand of God for ever and ever.

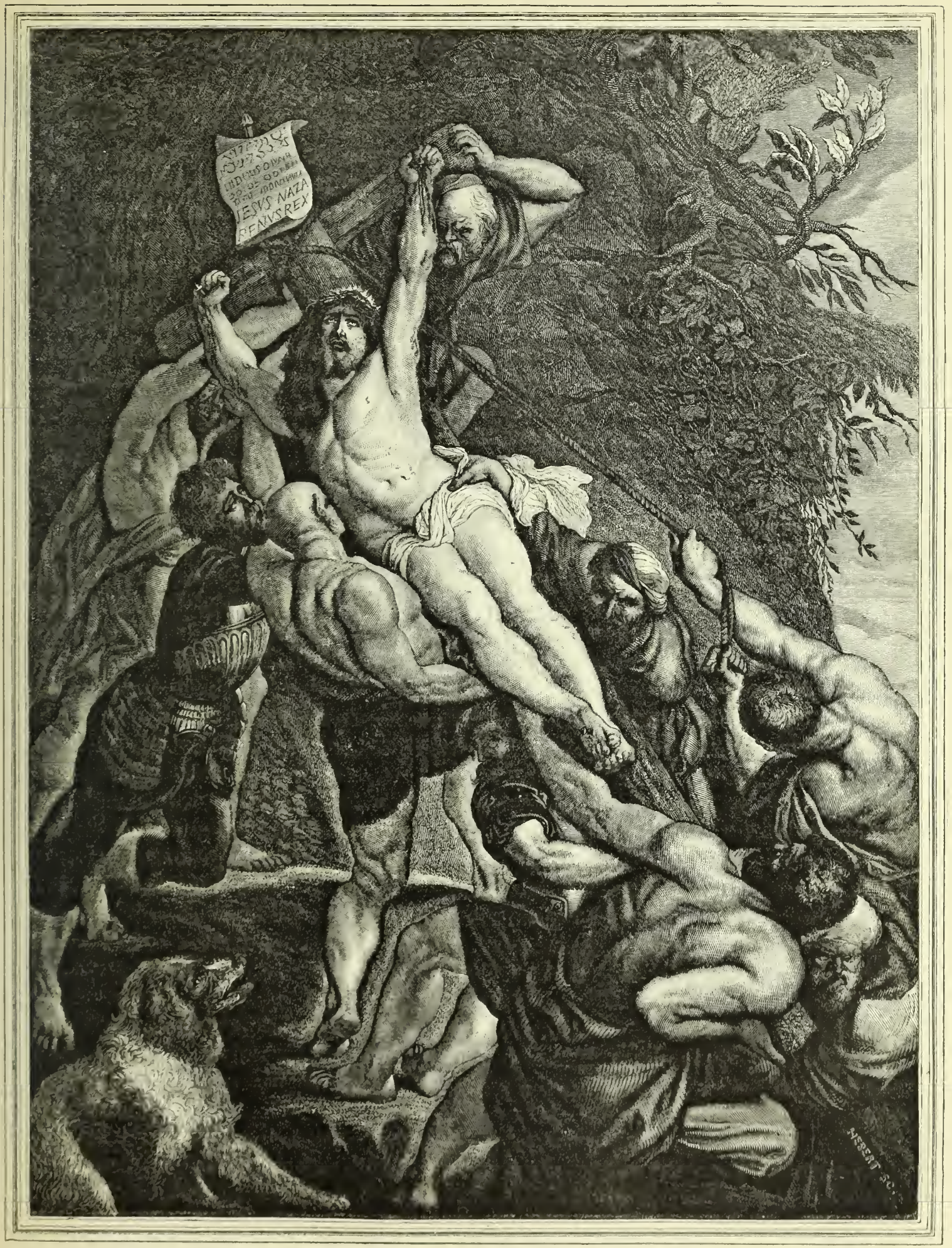
Sentence being pronounced against the blessed Jesus, the soldiers were ordered to prepare for his execution, a command which they readily obeyed, and, after clothing him in his own garments, led him away to crucify him. It is not said that they took the crown of thorns from his temples: probably he died wearing it, that the title placed over his head might be the better understood.

It is not to be expected that the ministers of Jewish malice remitted any of the circumstances of affliction which were ever laid on persons condemned to be crucified. Accordingly, Jesus was obliged to walk on foot to the place of execution, bearing his cross. But the fatigue of the preceding night, spent without sleep, the sufferings he had undergone in the garden, his having been hurried from place to place, and obliged to stand the whole time of his trials, the want of food, and the loss of blood he had sustained, and not his want of courage on this occasion, made him faint under the burden of his cross. The soldiers, seeing him unable to bear the weight, laid it on one Simon, a native of Cyrene, in Egypt, the father of Alexander and Rufus, well known among the first Christians, and forced him to bear it after the great Redeemer of mankind. The soldiers did not, however, do this out of compassion to the sufferings of Jesus, but to prevent his dying with the fatigue, and by that means eluding his punishment.

The blessed Jesus, in this journey to Calvary, was followed by an innumerable multitude of people, particularly of women, who lamented bitterly the severity of his sentence, and showed all the tokens of sincere compassion and grief. Jesus, who always felt the woes of others more than he did his own, forgetting his distress at the very time when it lay heaviest upon him, turned himself about, and, with a benevolence and tenderness truly Divine, said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" As if he had said, Dry up these tears, ye daughters of Jerusalem, which ye shed in compassion to me, and reserve them for the deplorable fate of yourselves and of your children; for the calamities that will soon fall on you and your offspring are truly terrible, and call for the bitterest lamentations. In those days of vengeance you will passionately wish that you had not given birth to a generation whose wickedness has rendered them the objects of the wrath of the Almighty to such a degree as never was before experienced in the world. Then shall they wish to be crushed under the weight of enormous mountains, and concealed from their enemies in the bowels of the hills. The thoughts of these calamities afflict my soul far more than the feeling of my own sufferings; for if the Romans are permitted to inflict such punishments on me, who am innocent, how dreadful must the vengeance be which they shall inflict on a nation whose sins cry aloud to heaven, hastening the pace of the Divine judgments, and rendering the perpetrators as proper for punishment as dry wood is for the flames!

Being arrived at the place of execution, which was called Golgotha, or the place of skulls, from the criminals' bones which they scattered there, some of our Redeemer's friends offered him a stupefying potion, to render him insensible to the ignominy and excruciating pain of his punishment. But as soon as he tasted the potion he refused to drink it, being determined to bear his sufferings, however sharp, not by intoxicating and stupefying himself, but by the strength of patience, fortitude, and faith.

Jesus having refused the potion, the soldiers began to execute their orders by stripping him quite naked, and in that condition began to fasten him to his cross. But while they were piercing his hands and his feet with nails, instead of crying out through the sharpness of the pain, he calmly, though fervently, prayed for them, and for all those who had any hand in his death, beseeching the Almighty to forgive them, and excusing them



Raising the Cross. (*Rubens.*)

himself by the only circumstance that could alleviate their guilt; I mean, their ignorance. "Father," said the compassionate Redeemer of mankind, "forgive them, for they know not what they do." This was infinite meekness and goodness, truly worthy of the only-begotten Son of God — an example of forgiveness which, though it can never be equalled by any, should be imitated by all.

But, behold, the appointed soldiers dig the hole in which the cross was to be erected. The cross is placed in the ground, and the blessed Jesus lies on the bed of sorrows. They nail him to it. They erect it. His nerves crack. His blood distils. He hangs upon his wounds naked, a spectacle to heaven and earth. Thus was the only-begotten Son of God, who came down from heaven to save the world, crucified by his own creatures; and, to render the ignominy still greater, placed between two thieves. "Hear, O heavens! O earth, earth, earth, hear! The Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him."

It was usual for the crimes committed by malefactors to be written on a white board with black, and placed over their heads on the cross. In conformity to this custom, Pilate wrote a title in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, that all foreigners, as well as natives, might be able to read it, and fastened it to the cross, over the head of Jesus; and the inscription was, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." But when the chief priests and elders had read this title they were greatly displeased, because, as it represented the crime for which Jesus was condemned, it insinuated that he had been acknowledged for the Messiah. Besides, being placed over the head of one who was dying by the most infamous punishment, it implied that all who attempted to deliver the Jews should perish in the same manner. The faith and hope of the nation, therefore, being thus publicly ridiculed, it is no wonder that the priests thought themselves highly affronted, and accordingly came to Pilate, begging that the writing might be altered. But, as he had intended the affront in revenge for their forcing him to crucify Jesus contrary both to his judgment and inclination, he refused to grant their request. "What I have written," said he, "I have written."

When the soldiers had nailed the blessed Jesus to the cross, and erected it, they divided his garments among them; but his coat, or vesture, being without seam, woven from the top throughout, they agreed not to rend it, but to cast lots for it, that the prediction of the prophet concerning the death and sufferings of the Messiah might be fulfilled: "They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots"—a sufficient indication that every circumstance of the death and passion of the blessed Jesus was long before determined in the court of heaven; and accordingly his being crucified

between two malefactors was expressly foretold: "And he was numbered with the transgressors."

The common people, whom the vile priests had incensed against the blessed Jesus by the malicious falsehoods they had spread concerning him, and which they pretended to found on the deposition of witnesses; the common people, I say, seeing him hang in so infamous a manner upon the cross, and reading the inscription that was placed over his head, expressed their indignation at him by sarcastical expressions. "Ah, thou," said they, "that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross."

But the common people were not

The Crucifixion.

the only persons who mocked and derided the blessed Jesus while he was suffering to obtain the remission of sins for all mankind. The rulers, who now imagined they had effectually destroyed his pretensions to the character of the Messiah, joined the populace in ridiculing him; and, with a meanness of soul which many infamous wretches would have scorned, mocked him even while he was struggling with the agonies of death. They scoffed at the miracles by which he had demonstrated himself to be the Messiah, and promised to believe in him on condition of his proving his pretensions by descending from the cross. "He saved

others," said they; "himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him."

In the meantime nothing could be more false and hyprocritical than this pretension of the stiff-necked Jews; for they continued in their unbelief, notwithstanding they well knew that he raised himself from the dead—a much greater miracle than his coming down from the cross would have been; a miracle attested by witnesses whose veracity they could not call in question. It was told them by the soldiers whom they themselves placed at the sepulchre to watch the body, and who they were obliged to bribe largely to conceal the truth. It is, therefore, abundantly evident that if the blessed Jesus had descended from the cross, the Jewish priests would have continued in their infidelity, and consequently that their declaration was made with no other intention than to insult the Redeemer of mankind, thinking it impossible for him now to escape out of their hands.

The soldiers also joined in this general scene of mockery. "If thou be the King of the Jews," said they, "save thyself." If thou art the great Messiah expected by the Jews, descend from the cross by miracle, and deliver thyself from these excruciating torments.

Nor could even one of the thieves forbear mocking the great Lord of heaven and earth, though labouring himself under the most racking pains, and struggling with the agonies of death. But the other exercised a most extraordinary faith at a time when our great Redeemer was deserted by his Father, mocked by men, and hanged upon the cross as the most ignominious of malefactors. This Jewish criminal seems to have entertained a more rational and exalted notion of the Messiah's kingdom than even the disciples themselves. They expected nothing but a secular empire; he gave strong intimations of his having an idea of Christ's spiritual dominion; for, at the very time when Jesus was dying on the cross, he begged to be remembered by him when he came into his kingdom. "Lord," said he, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Nor did he make this request in vain; the great Redeemer of mankind answered him, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

But let us attentively consider the history of our blessed Saviour's passion, as it offers to our view events absolutely astonishing. For when we remember the perfect innocence of our great Redeemer, the uncommon love he bore to the children of men, and the many kind and benevolent offices he did for the sons and daughters of affliction; when we reflect on the esteem in which he was held all along by the common people, how cheerfully they followed him to the remotest corners of the country, nay, even into the desolate retreats of the wilderness, and with what pleasure

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The Crucifixion

LONDON: GEORGE BELL & SONS.

they listened to his discourses; when we consider these particulars, I say, we cannot help being astonished to find them, at the conclusion, rushing all of a sudden into the opposite extremes, and every individual as it were combined to treat him with the most barbarous cruelty.

When Pilate asked the people if they desired to have Jesus released, his disciples, though they were very numerous, and might have made a great appearance in his behalf, remained absolutely silent, as if they had been speechless or infatuated. The Roman soldiers, notwithstanding their general had declared him innocent, insulted him in the most inhuman manner. The scribes and Pharisees ridiculed him. The common people, who had received him with hosannas a few days before, wagged their heads at him as they passed by, and railed on him as a deceiver. Nay, the very thief on the cross reviled him.

This sudden revolution in the humours of the whole nation may seem unaccountable. But if we could assign a proper reason for the silence of the disciples, the principles which influenced the rest might be discovered in their several speeches. The followers of the blessed Jesus had attached themselves to him in expectation of being raised to great wealth and power in his kingdom, which they expected would have been established long before this time; but, seeing no appearance at all of what they had so long hoped for, they permitted him to be condemned, perhaps because they thought it would have obliged him to break the Roman yoke by a miracle.

With respect to the soldiers, they were angry that any one should pretend to royalty in Judea, where Cæsar had established his authority. Hence they insulted our blessed Saviour with the title of King, and paid him, in mockery, the honours of a sovereign.

As for the common people, they seem to have lost their opinion of him, probably because he had neither convinced the council nor rescued himself when they condemned him. They began, therefore, to consider the story of his pretending to destroy the temple and build it in three days as a kind of blasphemy, because it required Divine power to execute such an undertaking.

The priests and scribes were filled with the most implacable and diabolical malice against him, because he had torn off their masks of hypocrisy, and shown them to the people in their true colours. It is, therefore, no wonder that they ridiculed his miracles, from whence he derived his reputation.

In short, the thief also fancied that he must have delivered both himself and them if he had been the Messiah; but, as no such deliverance appeared, he upbraided him for making pretensions to that high character.

But now, my soul, take one view of thy dying Saviour breathing out his soul upon the cross! Behold his

unspotted flesh lacerated with stripes, by which thou art healed! See his hands extended and nailed to the cross; those beneficent hands which were incessantly stretched out to unloose thy heavy burdens, and to impart blessings of every kind! Behold his feet riveted to the accursed tree with nails; those feet which always went about doing good, and travelled far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation! View his tender temples encircled with a wreath of thorns, which shoot their keen afflictive points into his blessed head; that head which was ever meditating peace to poor lost and undone sinners, and spent many a wakeful night in ardent prayers for their happiness! See him labouring in the agonies of death, breathing out his soul into the hands of his Almighty Father, and praying for his cruel enemies! Was ever love like this? Was ever benevolence so finely displayed?

O my soul, put thou thy trust in that bleeding, that dying Saviour! Then, though the pestilence walketh in darkness, and the sickness destroyeth at noonday; though thousands fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand, thou needest not fear the approach of any evil! Either the destroying angel shall pass over thee, or dispense the corrections of a friend, not the scourges of an enemy, which, instead of hurting, will work for thy good. Then, though profaneness and infidelity, far more malignant evils, breathe their contagion, and taint multitudes around thee, thou shalt be safely hid in the hollow of his hand, and freed from every danger.

Come then, my soul, let us take sanctuary under that tree of life, the ignominious cross of thy bleeding Saviour; let us fly for safety to that city of refuge opened in his bleeding wounds. These will prove a sacred hiding-place, not to be pierced by the flames of Divine wrath, or the fiery darts of temptation. His dying merits, his perfect obedience will be as "rivers of waters in a dry place, or as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

But particularly in that last tremendous day, when the heavens shall be rent asunder and wrapped up like a scroll; when his Almighty arm shall arrest the sun in his career, and dash the structure of the universe to pieces; when the dead, both small and great, shall be gathered before the throne of his glory, and the fates of all mankind hang on the very point of a final, irreversible decision; then, if thou hast faithfully trusted in him, and made his precepts thy constant directors, shalt thou be owned and defended by him. O reader! may both thou that perusest and he who hath written this for thy soul's advantage be covered, at that unutterably important juncture, by the wings of his redeeming love; then shall we behold all the horrible convulsions of expiring nature with composure, with comfort! We shall even welcome the consummation of all things

as the "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

But see! the sun, conscious of the sufferings of his Maker, and, as it were, to hide his face from this detestable action of mortals, is wrapped in the pitchy mantle of chaotic darkness! This preternatural eclipse of the sun continued for three hours, to the great terror and astonishment of the people present at the execution of our dear Redeemer. And surely nothing could be more proper than this extraordinary alteration in the face of nature while the Sun of Righteousness was withdrawing his beams, not only from the promised land, but from the whole world; for it was at once a miraculous testimony given by the Almighty himself to the innocence of his Son, and a proper emblem of the departure of him who was the light of the world; at least, his luminous rays, like the beams of the morning, shone out anew with additional splendour in the ministry of his apostles.

Nor was the darkness which now covered Judea and the neighbouring countries, beginning about noon and continuing till Jesus expired, the effect of an ordinary eclipse of the sun. It is well known that these phenomena can only happen at the change of the moon, whereas the Jewish Passover, at which time our dear Redeemer suffered, was always celebrated at the full. Besides, the total darkness of an eclipse of the sun never exceeds twelve or fifteen minutes, whereas this continued three full hours. Nothing, therefore, but the immediate hand of that Almighty Being who placed the sun in the centre of the planetary system could have produced this astonishing darkness. Nothing but Omnipotence, who first lighted this glorious luminary of heaven, could have deprived it of its cheering rays. Now, ye scoffers of Israel, whose blood have ye so earnestly desired, and wished it might fall upon you and your children? Behold, all nature is dressed in the sable veil of sorrow, and, in a language that cannot be mistaken, mourns the departure of its Lord and Master, weeps for your crimes, and deprecates the vengeance of Heaven upon your guilty heads! Happy for you that this suffering Jesus is compassion itself, and even in the agonies of death prays to his heavenly Father to avert from you the stroke of his justice!

This preternatural eclipse of the sun was considered as a miracle by the heathens themselves; and one of them cried out, "Either the world is at an end, or the God of nature suffers." And well might he use the expression; for never since this planetary system was called from its primitive chaos was known such a deprivation of light in the glorious luminary of day. Indeed, when the Almighty punished Pharaoh for refusing to let the children of Israel depart out of his land, the sable veil of darkness was for three days drawn over Egypt; but this darkness was confined to a part of that kingdom, whereas this that

happened at our Saviour's crucifixion was universal.

When the darkness began, the disciples naturally considered it as a prelude to the deliverance of their Master; for though the chief priests, elders, and people had sarcastically desired him to descend from the accursed tree, his friends could not but be persuaded that he who had delivered so many from incurable diseases, who had created limbs for the maimed and eyes for the blind, who had given speech to the dumb and called the dead from the chambers of the dust, might easily save himself even from the cross.

When, therefore, his mother, his mother's sister, Mary Magdalene, and the beloved disciple observed the veil of darkness begin to extend over the face of nature, they drew near to the foot of the cross, probably in expectation that the Son of God was going to shake the frame of the universe, unloose himself from the cross, and take ample vengeance on his cruel and perfidious enemies.

The blessed Jesus was now in the midst of his sufferings; yet, when he saw his mother and her companions, their grief greatly affected his tender breast, especially the distress of his mother. The agonies of death under which he was now labouring could not prevent his expressing the most affectionate regard both for her and for them. For, that she might have some consolation to support her under the greatness of her sorrows, he told her the disciple whom he loved would, for the sake of that love, supply his place to her after he was taken from them, even the place of a son; and therefore he desired her to consider him as such, and expect from him all the duties of a child. "Woman," said he, "behold thy Son!"

Nor was this remarkable token of filial affection towards his mother the only instance the dying Jesus gave of his sincere love for his friends and followers; the beloved disciple had also a token of his high esteem. He singled him out as the only person among his friends to supply his place with regard to his mother. Accordingly, he desired him expressly to reverence her in the same manner as if she had been his own parent—a duty which the favourite disciple gladly undertook, carried her with him to his house, and maintained her from that hour to the day of her death; her husband Joseph having, it seems, been dead some time.

Thus, in the midst of the heaviest sufferings that human nature ever sustained, the blessed Jesus demonstrated a Divine strength of benevolence. Even at the time when his own distress was at the highest pitch, and nature was dressed in the robe of mourning for the sufferings of the Redeemer of mankind, his friends had so large a share of his concern, that their happiness interrupted the sharpness of his pains, and for a short time engrossed his thoughts.

But now the moment when he should resign his soul into the hands

of his heavenly Father approached, and he repeated part, at least, of the twenty-second Psalm, uttering, with a loud voice, these remarkable words: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" or, as the words may be rendered, My God, my God, how long a time hast thou forsaken me!

Some believe that our blessed Saviour repeated the whole Psalm, it being the custom of the Jews, in making quotations, to mention only the first words of the Psalm or section which they cite. If so, as this Psalm contains the most remarkable particulars of our dear Redeemer's passion, being as it were a summary of all the prophecies relative to that subject, by repeating it on the cross, the blessed Jesus signified that he was now accomplishing the things that were predicted concerning the Messiah. And as the Psalm is composed in the form of a prayer, by pronouncing it at this time, he also claimed of his Father the performance of all the promises he had made, whether to him or to his people, the chief of which are recorded in the latter part of the Psalm.

Some of the people who stood by, when they heard our blessed Saviour pronounce the first words of the Psalm, misunderstood him, probably from their not hearing him distinctly, and concluded that he called for Elias, upon which one of them filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, being desirous to keep him alive as long as possible, to see whether Elias would come to take him down from the cross.

But, as soon as Jesus had tasted the vinegar, he said, "It is finished;" that is, the work of man's redemption is accomplished: that great work which the only-begotten Son of God came into the world to perform is finished. In speaking these words he cried with an exceedingly loud voice, and after the shout he addressed his Almighty Father in words which form the best pattern of a recommendatory prayer at the hour of death: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and having uttered these words, "he bowed his head, and yielded up the ghost."

But, behold! at the very instant that the blessed Jesus resigned his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father the veil of the temple was miraculously rent from the top to the bottom, probably in the presence of the priest who burnt incense in the holy place, and who doubtless published the account when he came out; for our blessed Saviour expired at the ninth hour, the very time of offering the evening sacrifice.

Nor was this the only miracle that happened at the death of the great Messiah; the earth trembled from its very foundations, the flinty rocks burst asunder, and the sepulchres hewn in them were opened, and many bodies of saints deposited there, awakened after his resurrection from the sleep of death, left the gloomy

chambers of the tomb, went into the city of Jerusalem, and appeared unto many.

And as the rending of the veil of the temple intimated that the entrance into the holy place, the type of heaven, was now laid open to all nations, so the resurrection of a number of saints from the dead demonstrated that the power of death and the grave was broken; the sting was taken from death, and the victory wrested from the grave. In short, our dear Redeemer's conquests over the enemies of mankind were shown to be complete, and an earnest was given of the general resurrection from the dead.

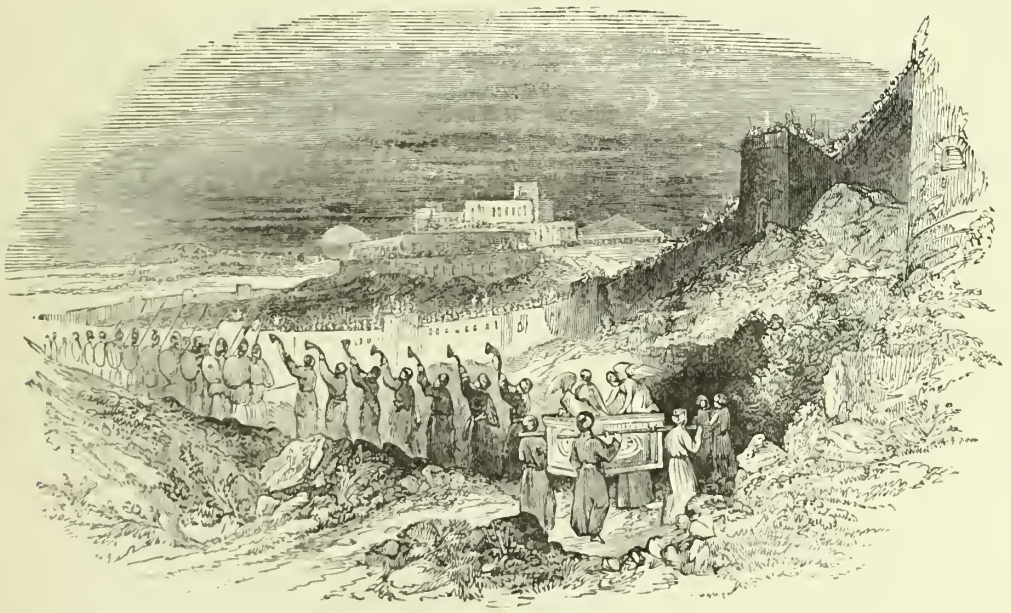
Nor did the remarkable particulars which attended that awful period when Jesus gave up the ghost affect the natives of Judea only. The Roman centurion, who was placed near the cross to prevent disorders of any kind, glorified the Almighty, and cried out, "Truly this was the Son of God;" and all the people, when they beheld heaven itself bearing witness of the truth of our great Redeemer's mission, smote their breasts and returned.

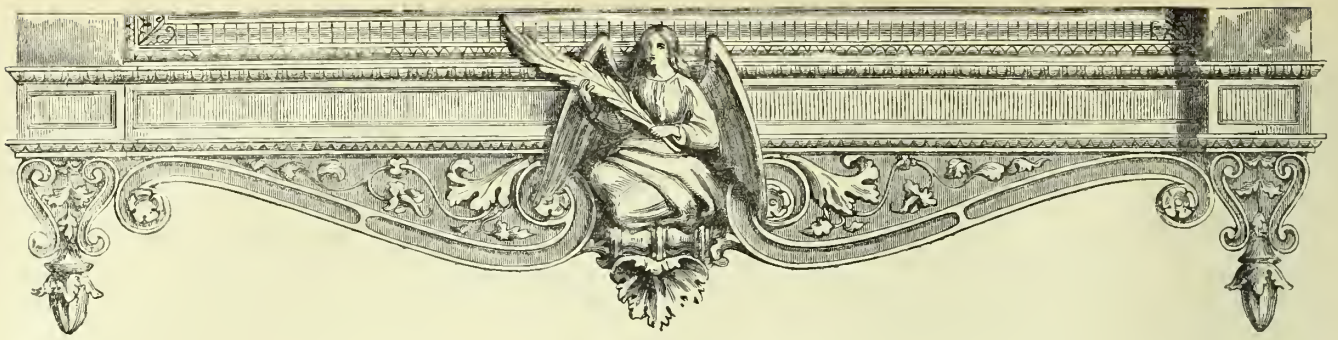
They had been instant with loud voices to have him crucified; but when they saw the face of the creation wrapped in the gloomy mantle of darkness during his crucifixion, and found his death accompanied with an earthquake, as if nature had been in an agony when he died, they rightly interpreted these prodigies to be so many testimonies from the Almighty of his innocence; and their passions, which had been inflamed and exasperated against him, became quite calm or exerted in his behalf. Some were angry with themselves for neglecting the opportunity the governor gave them of saving his life; some were stung with remorse for having been active in procuring Pilate to condemn him, and even offering the most bitter insults while he laboured under the cruellest of sufferings; and others were deeply affected at beholding the pains he suffered, which were undeservedly severe.

These various passions, being visibly painted in their countenances, afforded a melancholy spectacle: the whole multitude, returning from the cruel execution with their eyes fixed upon the earth, pensive and silent, their hearts ready to burst with grief, groaned deeply within themselves, shedding floods of tears, and smiting on their breasts.

The grief they now felt for the blessed Jesus was distinguished from their former rage against him by this remarkable particular—that their rage was entirely owing to the artful insinuations of the priests; whereas their grief was the genuine and natural feeling of their own hearts, greatly affected with the truth and innocence of him who was the object of their commiseration. And as flattery had no share in this mourning, so the expression of their sorrow was such as became a real and unfeigned passion.

Thus was demonstrated, by many awful tokens, the truth, the Divinity, the power of our Redeemer's mission. The blind, the obdurate Jews were struck with horror, fully convinced that the person they had cruelly put to death was nothing less than the Son and sent of God, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world.





CHAPTER XL.

The blessed Jesus is treated with indignity after his crucifixion. A pious person begs his body of Pilate in order for interment.

IT was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses that the bodies of those who were hanged should remain all night on the tree. In conformity to this law, and because the Sabbath was at hand, the Jews begged the governor that the legs of the three persons crucified might be broken, to hasten their death. To this request Pilate readily consented, and accordingly gave the necessary order to the soldiers to put it in execution.

But, on perceiving that Jesus was already dead, the soldiers did not give themselves the trouble of breaking his legs, as they had done those of the two malefactors that were crucified with him. One of them, however, either out of wantonness or cruelty, thrust a spear into his side, and out of the wound flowed blood and water.

This wound, therefore, was of the greatest importance to mankind, as it abundantly demonstrated the truth of our Saviour's death, and consequently prevented all objections that the enemies to our holy faith would otherwise have raised against it. The evangelist adds that the legs of our great Redeemer were not broken, but his side pierced, that two particular prophecies might be fulfilled: "A bone of him shall not be broken;" and, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced."

Among the disciples of our blessed Jesus was one called Joseph of Arimathea, a person equally remarkable for his birth, fortune, and office. This man, who was not to be intimidated by the malice of his countrymen, went boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of his great Master. He had, indeed, nothing to fear from the Roman governor, who, during the whole course of our Saviour's trial, had shown the greatest inclination to

The Entombment. (*Ferrari.*)

release him; but he had reason to apprehend that this action might draw upon him the malice of the rulers of the Jews, who had taken so great pains to get the Messiah crucified.

However, the great regard he had for the remains of his Master made him despise the malice of the Jews, being persuaded that Omnipotence would defend him, and cover his enemies with shame and confusion. And he well knew that if no friend procured a grant of the body, it would be ignominiously cast out among the executed malefactors.

Pilate was at first surprised at the request of Joseph, thinking it highly improbable that he should be dead in so short a time. He had, indeed, given orders for the soldiers to break the legs of the crucified persons, but he knew it was not uncommon for them to live many hours after that operation was performed; for though the pain they felt must be exquisite to the last degree, yet, as the vital parts remained untouched, life would continue some time in the miserable body.

The governor, therefore, called the centurion to know the truth of what Joseph had told him; and being convinced, from the answer of that officer, that Jesus had been dead some time, he readily gave the body to Joseph.

This worthy counsellor, having obtained his request, repaired to Mount Calvary, and, being assisted by Nicodemus, took the body down from the cross. The latter was formerly so cautious in visiting Jesus that he came to him by night; but in paying the last duties to his Master he used no art to conceal his design. He showed a courage far superior to that of any of the apostles, not only assisting Joseph in taking down the body of Jesus from the cross, but bringing with him a quantity of spices necessary in the burial of his Saviour.

Accordingly, they wrapped the body, with the spices, in fine linen, and laid it in a new sepulchre, which Joseph had hewn out of a rock for himself. This sepulchre was situated in a garden near Mount Calvary; but being not entirely finished when they deposited in it the body of the blessed Jesus, they fastened the door by rolling on it a very large stone.

Oh, what a wonderful spectacle was now exhibited in this memorable sepulchre! He who clothes himself with light as with a garment, and walks upon the wings of the wind, was pleased to wear the habiliments of mortality and dwell among the prostrate dead! Who can repeat the wondrous truth too often? Who can dwell upon the enchanting theme too long? He who sits enthroned in glory, and diffuses bliss among all the heavenly host, was once a pale and bloody corpse, and pressed the floor of this little sepulchre! O death! how great was thy triumph in that hour! Never did thy gloomy realms contain such a prisoner before. Prisoner did I say? No, he was more

Taking down from the Cross

than conqueror. He arose far more mightily than Samson from a transient slumber, broke down the gates, and demolished the strongholds of those dark dominions. And this, O mortals, is your consolation and security: Jesus has trod the dreadful path, and smoothed it for your passage. Jesus, sleeping in the chambers of the tomb, has brightened the dismal mansion, and left an inviting odour in those beds of dust. The dying Jesus is your sure protection, your unquestionable passport through

Dead Christ. (*Annibale Carracci.*)

the territories of the grave. Believe in him, and they shall prove a highway to Zion—shall transmit you safe to paradise. Believe in him, and you shall be no losers, but unspeakable gainers, by your dissolution. For hear what the oracle of heaven says on this important point: "Whoso believeth in me shall never die." Death shall no longer be inflicted as a punishment, but rather vouchsafed as a blessing. Their exit is the end of their frailty, and their entrance upon perfection: their last groan is the prelude to life and immortality.

But to return. The women of Galilee, who had watched their dear Redeemer in his last moments, and accompanied his body to the sepulchre, observing that the funeral rites were performed in a hurry, agreed among themselves, as soon as the Sabbath was passed, to return to the sepulchre, and embalm the body of their dead Saviour by anointing and swathing him in the manner then common among the Jews. Accordingly, they returned to the city, and purchased the spices necessary for that purpose, Nicodemus having furnished only a mixture of myrrh and aloes.

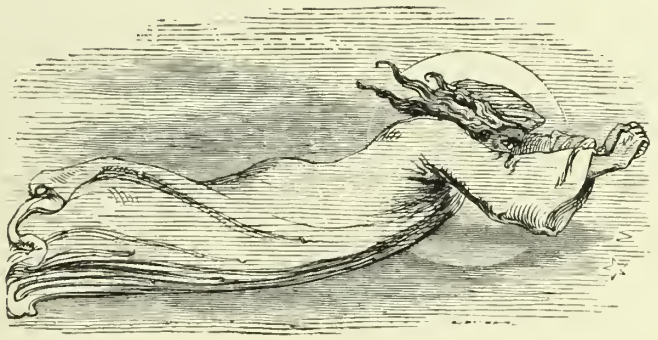
During these transactions, the chief priests and Pharisees, remembering that Jesus had more than once predicted his own resurrection, came to the governor, saying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again," and begged at the same time that a guard might be placed at the sepulchre, lest his disciples should carry away the body, and affirm that he was risen from the dead. This happened a little before it was dark in the evening, called "the next day that followed" by the evangelist, because the Jewish day began at sunset.

This request being thought reasonable by Pilate, he gave them leave to take as many soldiers as they pleased out of the cohort which, at the feast, came from the castle of Antonia, and kept guard in the porticoes of the temple; for that they were not Jewish, but Roman soldiers whom the priests employed to watch the sepulchre is evident from their asking them of the governor. Besides, when the soldiers returned with the news of our Saviour's resurrection, the priests desired them to report that his disciples had stolen him away while they slept; and, to encourage them to tell the falsehood, boldly promised that if their neglect of duty came to the governor's ears, proper methods should be used to pacify him, and deliver them from any punishment—a promise which there was no need of making to their own servants.

The priests, having thus obtained a guard of Roman soldiers, men long accustomed to military duties, and therefore the most proper for watching the body, set out with them to the sepulchre; and, to prevent these guards from combining with the disciples in carrying on any fraud, placed them at their post, and sealed the stone which was rolled to the door of the sepulchre.

The Entombment of Christ

Thus, what was designed to expose the mission and doctrines of Jesus as rank falsehood and vile imposture, proved, in fact, the strongest confirmation of the truth and Divinity of the same that could possibly be given, and placed what they wanted to refute, which was his resurrection from the dead, even beyond a doubt.



CHAPTER XLI.

Two pious women go to view the sepulchre of their crucified Lord and Saviour. An awful phenomenon happens. A ministering spirit descends. The Redeemer bursts the chains of death, and rises from the grave.

VERY early in the morning after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to visit the sepulchre in order to embalm the Lord's body, for the performance of which they had, in concert with several other women from Galilee, brought unguents and spices. But, before they reached the sepulchre, there was a great earthquake preceding the most memorable event that ever happened among the children of men—the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead. "For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men;" they fled into the city, and the Saviour of the world rose from the dead.

The angel, who had till then sat upon the stone, quitted his station, and entered into the sepulchre. In the meantime Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were still on their way to the sepulchre, together with Salome, who joined them on the road. As they proceeded on their way they consulted among themselves with regard to the method of putting their intention of embalming the body of their Master into execution, particularly with respect to the enormous stone which they had seen placed there with the utmost difficulty two days before. "Who," said they, "shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? for it was very great." But, in the midst of their deliberations about removing this great and sole obstacle to their design (for it does not appear they

knew anything of the guard), they lifted up their eyes, and perceived it was already rolled away.

Alarmed at so extraordinary and so unexpected a circumstance, Mary Magdalene concluded that the stone could not be rolled away without some design, and that they who rolled it away could have no other design than that of removing our Lord's body, and being convinced, by appearances, that they had really done so, she ran immediately to acquaint Peter and John with what she had seen, and what she suspected, leaving Mary and Salome there, that if the other women should arrive during her absence, they might acquaint them with their surprise at finding the stone removed, and of Mary Magdalene's running to inform the apostles of it.

In the meantime, the soldiers, who were terrified at seeing an awful mes-

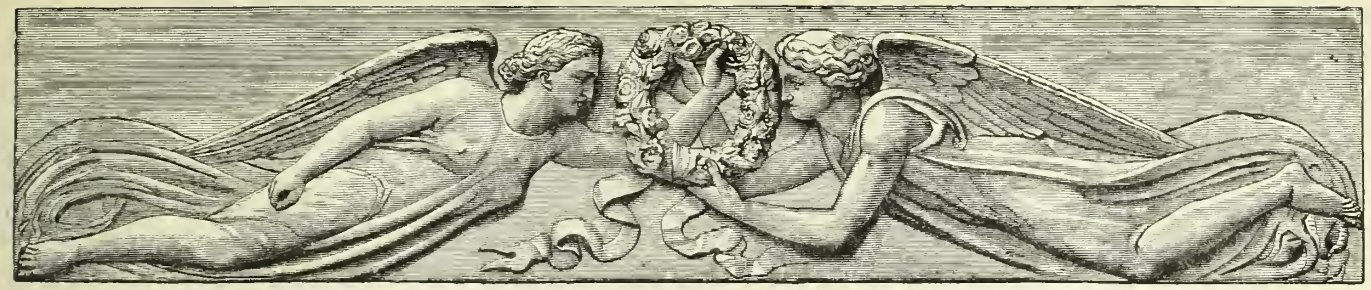
Earthquake at Jerusalem.

senger from on high roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and open it in quality of a servant, fled into the city, and informed the Jewish rulers of these miraculous appearances. This account was highly mortifying to the chief priests, as it was a proof of our Saviour's resurrection that could not be denied. They therefore resolved to stifle it immediately, and accordingly bribed the soldiers to conceal the real fact, and to publish everywhere that his disciples had stolen the body out of the sepulchre; "saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." (Matt. xxviii. 13, 15.)

What! the body taken away while the sepulchre was guarded by Roman

soldiers! Yes, the disciples stole the body while the soldiers slept! A story so inconsistent, and which so evidently carries the marks of its own confutation with it, deserves no answer.

The priests themselves could not be so stupid as not to foresee what constructions the world would put upon the relation of persons who pretended to know and tell what was done while they were asleep.



CHAPTER XLII.

The angel addresses the pious women. Two disciples go to the sepulchre. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. Afterwards to a company of women. Peter meets his Lord and Master after his resurrection.

WHILE Mary Magdalene was going to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre, and the supposed body taken away, Mary and Salome continued advancing towards the sepulchre, and at their arrival found what they expected—the body of their beloved Master gone from the place where it had been deposited by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; but at the same time beheld, to their great astonishment, a beautiful young man in shining raiment, very glorious to behold, sitting at the right side of the sepulchre.

Matthew tells us that it was the angel who had rolled away the stone, and frightened away the guards from the sepulchre. It seems he had now laid aside his terrors in which he was then arrayed, and assumed the form and dress of a human being, in order that these pious women, who had accompanied Jesus during the greatest part of the time of his public ministry, might be as little terrified as possible.

But, notwithstanding his beauty and benign appearance, they were greatly affrighted, and on the point of turning back, when the heavenly messenger, to banish their fears, told them, in a gentle accent, that he knew their errand. "Fear not," said he; "for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said;" and then invited them to come down into the sepulchre, and view the place where the Son of God had lain; that is, to look on the linen clothes, and the napkin that was about his head, and which he had left behind him when he arose from the dead; for to look at the place in any other view would not have tended to confirm their faith of his resurrection.

The women, greatly encouraged by the agreeable news, as well as by the sweet accent with which this sweet messenger from the heavenly Canaan delivered his speech, went down into the sepulchre, when, behold, another of the angelic choir appeared!

They did not, however, yet seem to give credit to what was told them by the angel, and therefore the other gently chid them for seeking the living among the dead, with an intention to do him an office due only to the latter, and for not believing what was told them by a messenger from heaven, or rather, for not remembering the words which their great Master had himself told them with regard to his own resurrection. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

When the women had satisfied their curiosity by looking at the place where the Lord had lain, and where nothing was to be found but the linen clothes, the angel who first appeared to them resumed the discourse, and bade them go and tell his disciples, particularly Peter, the glad tidings of his resurrection from the dead; that he was going before them to Galilee, and that they should there have the pleasure of seeing him.

The reason why the disciples were ordered to go into Galilee to meet their great and beloved Master seems to be this: they were now most of them in Jerusalem celebrating the Passover; and it may be easily imagined that, on receiving the news of their Lord's resurrection, many, if not all of them, would resolve to tarry in Jerusalem in expectation of meeting him—a thing which must have proved of great detriment to them at that time of the year, when the harvest was about to begin, the sheaf of first-fruits being always offered on the second day of the Passover week.

In order, therefore, to prevent their staying so long from home, the message was sent directing them to return to Galilee, with full assurance that they should there have the pleasure of seeing their great Lord and Master, and by that means be happily relieved from the suspicion of his being an impostor, which doubtless had arisen in their minds when they saw him expire on the cross.

The women, highly elated with the news of their Lord's resurrection, left the sepulchre immediately, and ran to carry the disciples these glad tidings.

During these transactions at the sepulchre, Peter and John, having been informed by Mary Magdalene that the stone was rolled away, and the body of Jesus not to be found, were hastening to the grave, and missed the women who had seen this vision of angels.

These disciples, being astonished at what Mary Magdalene had told them, and desirous of having their

Touch me not

doubts cleared up, made all the haste possible to the sepulchre; and John, being younger than Peter, arrived at the sepulchre first, but did not go in, contenting himself with stooping down and seeing the linen clothes lying which had been wrapped about our Saviour's body. Peter soon arrived, and went to the sepulchre, when he saw the "linen clothes lie: and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

Our Lord left the grave-clothes in the sepulchre to show that his body was not stolen away by his disciples, who in such a case would not have taken time to have stripped it. Besides, the circumstances of the grave-clothes disposed the disciples themselves to believe when the resurrection was related to them; but at present they had not the least suspicion that he was risen from the dead. These two disciples, having thus satisfied themselves that what Mary Magdalene had told them was really true, returned to their respective habitations; but Mary continued weeping at the door of the sepulchre. She had, it seems, followed Peter and John to the garden, but did not return with them, being anxious to find the body. Accordingly, stepping down into the sepulchre to examine it once more, she saw two angels sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They were now in the same position as when they appeared to the other women, but had rendered themselves invisible while Peter and John were at the sepulchre.

On her beholding these heavenly messengers dressed in the robes of light, she was greatly terrified; but they, in the most endearing accent, asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" to which she answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." On pronouncing these words she turned herself about, and saw Jesus standing near her; but the terror she was in, and the garments in which he was now dressed, prevented her from knowing him for some time. Jesus repeated the same question used before by the angel: "Woman, why weepest thou?" to which Mary, who now supposed him to be the gardener, answered, Sir, if his body be troublesome in the sepulchre, and thou hast removed him, tell me where he is deposited, and I will take him away. But our blessed Saviour, willing to remove her anxiety, called her by her name with his usual tone of voice, on which she immediately knew him, and falling down before him, would have embraced his knees, according to that modesty and reverence with which the women of the East saluted the men, especially those who were their superiors in station.

But Jesus refused this compliment, telling her that he was not going immediately to heaven. He was often to show himself to the disciples

before he ascended, so that she would have frequent opportunities of showing her regard to him; and at the same time said to her, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Thus did the blessed Jesus contemplate with a singular pleasure the work of redemption he had just finished. The happy relation between God and men, which had been long cancelled by sin, was now renewed. The Almighty, who had disowned them on account of their rebellion, was again reconciled to them; he was become their God and Father; they were exalted to the honourable relation of Christ's brethren and the sons of God; and their Father loved them with an affection far exceeding that of the most tender-hearted parent upon earth. The kindness of the message sent by our dear Redeemer to his disciples will appear above all praise if we remember their late behaviour. They had every one of them forsaken him in the greatest extremity: when he was scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers, derided by his countrymen, and spitefully entreated by all, they hid themselves in some place of safety, and preferred their own security to the deliverance of their Master. When he fainted under the burden of his cross, not one of them was there to assist him.

Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled by the Roman soldiers to ease him of his ponderous burden. But, notwithstanding they had refused to assist their Master during his sufferings for the sins of the world, he graciously, he freely forgave them; he assured them of their pardon, and called them even by the endearing name of brethren.

There is something very remarkable in this part of the history. None of the apostles or male disciples were honoured with the first visions of the angels, or with the immediate news of the resurrection of the Son of God, much less with the appearance of Jesus himself.

The angels in the sepulchre kept themselves invisible all the time that Peter and John were observing the linen clothes, and satisfying themselves that the body of their Master was not there. Perhaps the male disciples in general were treated with this mark of disrespect both because they had, with shameful cowardice, forsaken their Master when he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and because their faith was so weak that they had absolutely despaired of his being the Messiah when they saw him expire on the cross. But how different was the conduct of the women! Laying aside the weakness and timidity natural to their sex, they showed an uncommon magnanimity on this melancholy occasion; for in contradiction to the whole nation, who with one voice required Jesus to be crucified as a deceiver, they proclaimed his innocence by tears, cries, and lamentations when they saw him led forth to

suffer on Mount Calvary; accompanied him to the cross, the most infamous of all punishments; kindly waited on him in his expiring moments, giving him all the consolation in their power, though at the same time the sight of his suffering pierced them to the heart; and when he expired and was carried off, they accompanied him to the grave, not despairing, though they found he had not delivered himself, but to appearance was conquered by death, the universal enemy of mankind. Perhaps these pious women entertained some faint hopes that he would

Jesus fainting under the burden of the Cross. (G. Jäger.)

still revive; or, if they did not entertain expectations of that kind, they at least cherished a strong degree of love for their Lord, and determined to do him all the honour in their power.

A faith so remarkably strong, a love so ardent, and a fortitude so unshaken could not fail of receiving distinguishing marks of the Divine approbation; and they were accordingly honoured with the news of Christ's resurrection before the male disciples had their eyes cheered with the first sight of their beloved Lord after he rose from the chambers of

the grave, so that they preached the joyful tidings of his resurrection to the apostles themselves.

But there seem to have been other reasons why our great Redeemer showed himself first to the women. The thoughts of the apostles were constantly fixed on a temporal kingdom, and they had wrested all his words into an agreement with that favourite notion; and whatever they could not construe as consonant to that opinion they seem either to have disbelieved or disregarded.

Hence, notwithstanding Jesus had foretold his own sufferings no less than seven different times, they were astonished above measure when they saw him expire on the cross. Immortality and terrestrial dominion were, according to their notion, the characteristics of the Messiah; for which reason, when they found that, instead of establishing himself in the possession of universal empire, he had neither delivered himself from a handful of enemies, nor even from death, they gave over all hopes of his being the Messiah. And as for his resurrection, they seem not to have entertained the least notion of it; so that when the news of this great event was brought to them, they considered it as an idle tale.

Not so the women: they were more submissive to their Master's instructions, and consequently were much better prepared for seeing him after his resurrection than the apostles; for though they did not expect that he would rise from the dead, yet they were not prejudiced against it. This cannot be said of the apostles; they not only absolutely rejected the matter at first, as a thing incredible, but even after they were acquainted with the accounts the soldiers had given of this great transaction—nay, after they had seen the blessed Jesus himself—some of them were so unreasonable as still to doubt. How much rather, then, would their incredulity have led them to suspect his appearance as an illusion, had he showed himself to them! These reports led him to recollect the arguments proper for disposing them to believe, particularly the prophecies that had been so often delivered in their own hearing concerning his resurrection. Hence the angels, when they told this event to the women, and desired them to carry the news of it to his disciples, put them in mind of the predictions Jesus himself had made as a confirmation of it. Hence we also see the reason why Jesus, before he made himself known to the disciples at Emmaus, prepared them for a discovery by expounding to them, on the road, the several prophecies concerning the Messiah contained in the Old Testament.

The women, on their arrival, told as many of the disciples as they could find that they had seen at the sepulchre a vision of angels, who assured them that Jesus was risen from the dead. This new information astonished the disciples exceedingly; and, as they had before sent Peter and

John to examine into the truth of what Mary Magdalene had told them concerning the body's being removed out of the sepulchre, so they now judged it highly proper to send some of their number to see the angels, and learn from them the joyful tidings of the great transaction of which the women had given them an account.

That it was really the case appears from what the disciples, in their journey to Emmaus, told their Lord and Master; namely, that when the women came and told them that they had seen a vision of angels, certain of their number went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said, but him they saw not.

This second deputation from the apostles did not go alone; for, as Mary Magdalene returned with Peter and John, who were sent to examine the truth of her information, so the women who brought an account of the vision of angels in all probability returned with those who were sent to be witnesses of the truth of their report. Besides curiosity, they had an errand thither. The angels had expressly ordered them to tell the news to Peter in particular; for which reason, when they understood that he was gone to the sepulchre, it is natural to think they would return with the disciples to seek him. About the time that the disciples and women set out for the sepulchre, Peter and John reached the city, but, passing through a different street, did not meet their brethren.

The disciples, having a great desire to reach the sepulchre, soon left the women behind, and just as they arrived, Mary Magdalene, having seen the Lord, was coming away. But they did not meet her, because they entered the garden at one door while she was coming out at another. When they came to the sepulchre they saw the angels, and received from them the news of their blessed Master's resurrection; for St. Luke tells us "they found it even as the women had said." Highly elated with their success, they departed and ran back to the city with such expedition, that they gave an account of what they had seen in the hearing of the two disciples before Mary Magdalene arrived.

Nor will their speed appear at all incredible if we consider that the nature of the tidings the apostles had to carry gave them wings, as it were, to make their brethren partakers of their joy at this surprising transaction.

In the meantime the company of women, who followed the disciples, happening to meet Peter and John, went forward in quest of them. But they had not gone far from the sepulchre before Jesus himself met them, and said "All hail!" on which they approached their great Lord and Master, "held him by the feet, and worshipped him." This favour of embracing his knees Jesus had before refused to Mary Magdalene, because it was not then necessary; but he granted it to the women because the angel's words having

strongly impressed their minds with the notion of his resurrection, they might have taken his appearing for an illusion of their own imagination, had he not permitted them to handle him, and convince themselves by the united reports of their senses. Besides, if our Lord intended that Mary Magdalene should go away as fast as possible and publish the news, he might hinder her from embracing his knees to prevent her losing any time.

This company of pious women, having tarried some time with Jesus on the road, did not arrive with the joyful tidings of their great Master's resurrection till some time after Peter and John, and perhaps were overtaken by Mary Magdalene on the road, unless we suppose that she arrived a few minutes before them. But, be that as it may, this is certain—that they arrived either at or near the same time, so that their accounts of this miraculous event tended to confirm each other.

The disciples were now lost in astonishment at what the women had related. They considered the account they had before given them of their having seen a vision of angels as an idle tale, and now they seem to have considered this as something worse; for the evangelists tell us that they believed not.

Peter, indeed, to whom the angel sent the message, was disposed by his sanguine temper to give a little more credit to their words than the rest, possibly because the messengers from the heavenly Canaan had done him the honour of naming him in particular. Elated with the respect thus paid to him, he immediately repaired again to the sepulchre, hoping, in all probability, that his Master would appear to him, or at least the angel who had so particularly distinguished him from the rest of the disciples.

As soon as Peter arrived at the sepulchre he stooped down, and seeing the linen clothes lying in the same manner as before, he viewed their position, the form in which they were laid, and returned, wondering greatly in himself at what had happened.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Jesus appears on divers occasions to different disciples. Reproves and convinces Thomas of his unbelief. Shows himself to a great number of his followers into Galilee.

SOON after the women's first return to the disciples with the news that they had seen a vision of angels, who told them that Jesus was risen from the dead, two of the brethren departed on their journey to a village called Emmaus, about two miles distant from Jerusalem. The concern they were in on account of the death of their great and beloved Master was sufficiently visible in their countenances; and as they pursued their journey, talking with one another, and debating about the things that had lately happened among them concerning the life and doctrine, the sufferings and death, of the holy Jesus, and of the report that was just spread among his disciples of his being that very morning risen from the dead, Jesus himself overtook them, and joined company with them.

As he appeared like a stranger, they did not in the least suspect that their fellow-traveller was no other than the great Redeemer of the sons of men. He soon entered into discourse with them by inquiring what event had so closely engaged them in conversation, and why they appeared so sorrowful and dejected, as if they had met with some heavy disappointment.

One of them, whose name was Cleophas, being surprised at the question, replied, Is it possible that you can be so great a stranger to the affairs of the world as to have been at Jerusalem, and not have heard the surprising events that have happened there—events that have astonished the whole city, and are now the constant topic of conversation among all the inhabitants? Jesus answered, What surprising events do you mean? to which Cleophas replied, The transactions which have happened concerning Jesus of Nazareth,

who appeared as a great prophet and teacher sent from God, and accordingly was highly venerated among the people for the excellency of his doctrine, and the number, benefit, and greatness of his miracles. Our chief priests and elders, therefore, envying him as one who lessened their authority over the people, apprehended him, and found means to put him to death. But we firmly believed he would have proved himself the Messiah, or great Deliverer. And this persuasion we a long time supported; nor were we willing to abandon it, even when we saw him put to death. But it is now three days since these things were done, and therefore begin to fear we were mistaken. This very morning, indeed, a thing happened which extremely surprises us, and we are very solicitous with regard to the event. Some women, who had entertained the same hopes and expectations as we, going early in the morning to pay their last duties to their Master by embalming him, returned with great haste to the city, and informed us that they had been at the sepulchre, but were disappointed in not finding the body; and, to increase our surprise, they added that they had seen a vision of angels, who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. This relation appeared at first to us as an idle tale, altogether incredible; but two of the company, going immediately after to the sepulchre, found everything exactly as the women had reported. They saw the angels, but heard not anything of the body; so that we are still in doubt and perplexity with regard to this wonderful event.

In his turn Jesus replied, Why are ye so very averse to believe all that the prophets have with one voice predicted concerning the Messiah? Is it not clearly and very expressly foretold, in all the prophetic writings, that it was appointed by the counsel of Omnipotence for the Messiah to suffer in this manner, and that after sustaining the greatest indignities, reproach, and contempt from the malice and perverseness of mankind, and even undergoing an ignominious and cruel death, he was to be exalted to a glorious and eternal kingdom? And having said this, he began at the writings of Moses, and explained to them in order all the principal passages, both in the books of that great legislator and the writings of the other prophets, relating to his own sufferings, death, and glorious resurrection.

And this he did with such surprising plainness, clearness, and strength, that the two disciples, not yet suspecting who he was, were as much amazed to find a stranger so well acquainted with all that Jesus did and suffered as they at first wondered at his appearing to be totally ignorant of these transactions. They were also astonished to hear him interpret and apply the Scriptures to their present purpose with such readiness and convincing clearness of argument as carried with it a strange and un-

Christ at Emmaus.

usual authority and efficacy. When, therefore, they came to the village whither they were going, and Jesus seemed as if he would have passed on and travelled further, they, desirous of his company, pressed him in the strongest manner to tarry with them that night, as it was then late.

To this request the great Redeemer of mankind consented; and when they were sat down to supper, he took bread and gave thanks to God, and brake it, and gave it to them in the same manner he used to do while he conversed with them upon earth before his death. This engaged their attention, and, looking steadfastly on him, they perceived it was their great and beloved Master.

But they had then no time to express their joy and astonishment to their benevolent Redeemer, for he immediately vanished out of their sight.

As soon as tney saw their Master was departed they said one to another, How slow and stupid were we before, not to know him upon the road, while he explained to us the Scriptures, when, besides the affability of his discourse and the strength and clearness of his argument, we perceived such an authority in what he said, and such a powerful efficacy attending his words, striking our hearts with an affection we could not but have known, if we had not been remarkably stupid, to have been the very same that used to accompany his teaching, and was peculiar to it!

This surprising event would not admit them to stay any longer in Emmaus. They returned that very night to Jerusalem, and found the apostles, with several other disciples, discoursing about the resurrection of their Master; and, on their entering the room, the disciples accosted them, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon."

They had given little credit to the reports of the women, supposing they were occasioned more by imagination than reality; but when a person of Simon's capacity and gravity declared he had seen the Lord, they began to think that he was really risen from the dead; and their belief was greatly confirmed by the arrival of the two disciples from Emmaus, who declared to their brethren how Jesus had appeared to them on the road, and how they discovered him to be their Master by his breaking of bread.

While the disciples from Emmaus were thus describing the manner of the appearing of Jesus to them, and offering arguments to convince those who doubted the truth of it, their great Master himself put an end to the debate by standing in the midst of them, and saying, "Peace be unto you."

This appearance of our blessed Saviour greatly terrified the disciples, who supposed they had seen a spirit; for, having secured the doors of the house where they were assembled, for fear of the Jews, and Jesus having opened the locks by his miraculous power, without the knowledge of any in the house, it was natural for them

to think that a spirit only could enter. The circumstance, therefore, of the doors being shut is very happily mentioned by St. John, because it suggests a reason why the disciples took their Master for a spirit, notwithstanding many of them were convinced that he was really risen from the dead, and were at that moment conversing about his resurrection.

But, to dispel their fears and doubts, Jesus came forward, spoke to them in the most endearing accents, showed them his hands and his feet, and desired them to handle him, in order to convince themselves, by the united report of their different senses, that it was he himself, and no spectre or apparition. "Why are ye troubled?" said the benevolent Redeemer of mankind; "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

These infallible proofs sufficiently convinced the disciples of the truth of their Lord's resurrection, and they received him with rapture and exultation. But their joy and wonder had so great an effect on their minds, that some of them, sensible of the great commotion they were in, suspended their belief till they had considered the matter more calmly. Jesus, therefore, knowing their thoughts, called for meat, and eat with them, in order to prove more fully the truth of his resurrection from the dead, and the reality of his presence with them on this occasion.

After giving this further ocular demonstration of his having vanquished the power of death and opened the tremendous portals of the grave, he again repeated his salutation, "Peace be unto you;" adding, The same commission that my Father hath given unto me I give unto you: go you, therefore, into every part of the world, and preach the gospel to all the children of men. Then, breathing on them, he said, Receive the Holy Ghost to direct and assist you in the execution of your commission. Whosoever embraces your doctrine, and sincerely repents, ye shall remit his sins, and your sentence of absolution shall be ratified and confirmed in the courts of heaven; and whosoever either obstinately rejects your doctrine, disobeys it, or behaves himself unworthily after he hath embraced it, his sins shall not be forgiven him, but the censure ye shall pass upon him on earth shall be confirmed in heaven.

Thomas, otherwise called Didymus, was absent at this meeting of the apostles; nor did this happen without the special direction of Providence, that the particular and extraordinary satisfaction which was afterwards granted him might be an abundant and undeniable testimony of the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection to all succeeding generations. The rest of the apostles, therefore, told him that they had seen the Lord, and repeated to him the words he had

delivered in their hearing. But Thomas replied, This event is of such great importance that unless, to prevent all possibility of deception, I see

The Incredulity of St. Thomas. (*Conegliano.*)

him with mine own eyes, and feel him with mine own hands, putting my fingers into the print of the nails whereby he was fastened to the cross,

and thrust my hand into his side which the soldier pierced with his spear, I will not believe that he is really and truly risen from the dead.

Thus have I enumerated, in the most explicit manner, the transactions of that day on which the great Redeemer of mankind arose from the dead—a day highly to be remembered by the children of men throughout all generations; a day in which were fully completed and displayed the conceptions lodged in the breast of Infinite Wisdom from all eternity, even those thoughts of love and mercy on which the salvation of the world depended. Christians have, therefore, the highest reason to solemnise this day with gladness, each returning week, by ceasing from their labour, and giving up themselves to prayer and pious meditations, and other exercises of religion. The redemption of mankind, which they weekly commemorate, affords matter for eternal thought; it is a subject impossible to be equalled, and whose lustre neither length of time nor frequent reviewing can either tarnish or diminish. It resembles the sun, which we behold always the same glorious and luminous object; for the benefit we celebrate is, after so many ages, as fresh and beautiful as ever, and will always continue the same, flourishing in the memories of all pious persons, through the endless revolutions of eternity. Redemption is the brightest mirror in which we contemplate the goodness of the Almighty. Other gifts are only mites from the Divine treasury; but redemption opens, I had almost said exhausts, all the stores of his grace. May it be constantly the favourite subject of our meditations, more delightful to our musing minds than applause to the ambitious ear! May it be the darling theme of our discourses—sweeter to our tongues than the droppings of the honeycomb to the taste! May it be our choicest comfort through all the changes of this mortal life, and the reviving cordial even in the last extremities of dissolution itself!

Eight days after the resurrection of our great Redeemer, the blessed Jesus showed himself again to his disciples while Thomas was with them, and upbraided that disciple for his unbelief; but knowing that it did not, like that of the Pharisees, proceed from a wicked mind, but from an honest heart and a sincere desire of being satisfied of the truth, he thus addressed himself to his doubting disciple:—Thomas, said he, since thou wilt not be contented to rely on the testimony of others, but must be convinced by the experience of thy own senses, behold the wounds in my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and doubt no longer of the reality of my resurrection.

Thomas immediately obeyed the kind invitation of his Master, and, being fully satisfied according to his own desire, he cried out, I am abundantly convinced: thou art indeed my Lord, the very same that was

crucified; and I acknowledge thy Almighty power in having triumphed over death, and worship thee as my God.

To which the blessed Jesus replied, Because thou hast both seen and felt me, Thomas, thou hast believed that I am really risen from the dead; but blessed are they who, without such evidence of the senses, shall, upon credible testimony, be willing to believe and embrace a doctrine which tends so greatly to the glory of God and the salvation of the sons of men.

St. John adds that the blessed Jesus appeared on several other occasions to his disciples after his resurrection, and by many infallible proofs not mentioned by the evangelists fully convinced them that he was alive after his passion; but that those which are mentioned are abundantly sufficient to induce men to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the great Messiah so often foretold by the ancient prophets; and that, by means of that belief, they may obtain everlasting life in the happy regions of the heavenly Canaan.

Our blessed Saviour having, first by the angels and afterwards in person, ordered his disciples to repair to their respective habitations in Galilee, it is reasonable to think they would leave Jerusalem as soon as possible. This they accordingly did, and, on their arrival at their respective places of abode, applied themselves to their usual occupations; and the apostles returned to their old trade of fishing on the Lake of Tiberias. Here they were toiling with their nets very early in the morning, and saw Jesus standing on the shore, but did not then know him to be their Master, as it was something dark, and they at a considerable distance from him. He, however, called to them, and then asked if they had taken any fish; to which they answered, they had caught nothing. He then desired them to let down their nets on the right side of the boat, and they should not be disappointed.

The disciples, imagining that he might be acquainted with the places proper for fishing, did as he had directed them, and enclosed in their net so vast a multitude of fishes, that they were not able to draw it into the boat, but were forced to drag it after them in the water towards the shore.

It seems they had toiled all the preceding night to no purpose, and therefore such remarkable success could not fail of causing various conjectures among them with regard to the stranger on the shore who had given them such happy advice. Some of the apostles declared they could not imagine who he was; but others were persuaded that this person was no other than their great and beloved Master. John was fully convinced of his being the Lord, and accordingly told his thoughts to Simon Peter, who, making no doubt of it, girded on his fisher's coat, and leaped into the sea, in order to get ashore sooner than the boat could be brought to land, dragging after it a net full of such large fishes.

When the disciples came ashore they found a fire kindled, and on it a fish broiling, and near it some bread. But neither being sufficient for the company, Jesus bade them bring some of the fish they had now caught, and invited them to eat with him. Thus did the blessed Jesus prove again to his disciples the reality of his resurrection, not only by eating with them, but by working a miracle like that which, at the beginning of his ministry, had made such an impression upon them as disposed them to be his constant followers.

This was the third time that Jesus appeared publicly to a great number of his disciples in a body, besides his showing himself at several times to particular persons upon special occasions.

When they had eaten, Jesus reminded Peter how diligent and zealous he ought to be in order to wipe off the stain of his denying him when he was carried before the high priest. Simon, son of Jonas, said our blessed Saviour to him, art thou more zealous and affectionate in thy love towards me than the rest of my disciples? to which Peter answered, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." He was taught modesty and diffidence by his late fall, and therefore would not compare himself with others, but humbly appealed to his Master's omniscience for the sincerity of his regard to him. Jesus answered, Express, then, thy love towards me by the care of my flock, committed to thy charge. "Feed my lambs—Feed my sheep." Show your love to me by publishing the great salvation I have accomplished, and feeding the souls of the faithful believers with that food which never perishes, but endures for ever and ever.

I well know, indeed, continued the blessed Jesus, that thou wilt continue my faithful shepherd even until death; for the time will come when thou, who now girdest on thy fisher's coat voluntarily, and stretchest out thy hands to come to me, shalt in thine old age be girt by others, and forced to stretch out thy hands against thy will, in a very different manner, for the sake of thy constant profession of my religion.

By these last words Jesus signified the manner of Peter's death, and that he should finally suffer martyrdom for the glory of God and the testimony of the truth of the Christian religion.

The time being now come when the disciples were to meet their great Lord and Master, according to the messages he had sent them by the women, and in all probability appointed at some former appearance not mentioned by the evangelists, the brethren set out for the mountain in Galilee—perhaps that on which he was transfigured. Here five hundred of them were gathered together, expecting the joyful sight of their great Master after he had triumphed over death and the grave, some of them not having yet seen him after his resurrection.

They did not wait long before

Jesus appeared, on which they were seized with rapture; their hearts overflowed with gladness; they approached their kind, their benevolent Master, and worshipped him. Some few, indeed, doubted, it being a thing agreeable to nature for men to be afraid to believe what they vehemently wish, lest they should indulge themselves in false joys which vanish like a morning cloud. But Jesus afterwards appeared frequently to them, and gave all of them full satisfaction, and instructed them in many things relating to their preaching the gospel, establishing the church, and spreading it through the whole earth.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Our Lord's ascension. The resurrection of Jesus asserted and vindicated against the objections of unbelievers. General review of the life and doctrines of the great Redeemer.

A FEW days before the feast of Pentecost, or the feast of weeks, the disciples went up to Jerusalem, where the blessed Jesus made his last appearance to them; and after instructing them in many particulars concerning the kingdom of God, and the manner they were to behave themselves in propagating the doctrine of the gospel, he put them in mind that, during his abode with them in Galilee, he had often told them that all things written in the law, the prophets, and the Psalms concerning him were to be exactly accomplished. At the same time, "he opened their understandings;" that is, he removed their prejudices by the operation of his Spirit, cleared their doubts, improved their memories, strengthened their judgments, and enabled them to discern the true meaning of the Scriptures.

Having thus qualified them for receiving the truth, he again assured them that both Moses and the prophets had foretold that the Messiah was to suffer in the very manner he had suffered; that he was to rise from the dead on the third day, as he had done; and that repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in the Messiah's name among all nations, beginning with the Jews.

He next delivered unto them their commission to preach the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations, and to testify unto the world the exact accomplishment in him of all things foretold concerning the Messiah; and, to enable them to perform this important work, promised to bestow on them the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which he called the promise of his Father, because the Almighty had promised them by his prophets.

Having thus fortified them for the important work they were going to

undertake, he led them on to the Mount of Olives, as far as Bethany, where, standing on a hill above the town, he told them that he was now raised to the government of heaven and earth; for which reason they might go courageously through all the world, and preach the gospel to every rational creature, assuring themselves that affairs in all countries should be so ordered as to dispose the inhabitants for the reception of the gospel, and that they who believed were to be admitted into his church by the rite of baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and to be taught, in consequence of their baptism, to obey all the precepts he had enjoined them; that such baptized believers should receive the pardon of their sins, together with eternal life in the happy mansions of his Father's kingdom; but those who refused to embrace the doctrines of the gospel should be for ever excluded those happy regions, and have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; that while they were employed in this work he would be with them to the end of the world, to guide them by his counsel, to assist them by his Spirit, and to protect them by his providence; finally, that those who should, through their preaching, be induced to believe, should themselves work most astonishing miracles, by which the gospel should be propagated with the greatest rapidity.

When the blessed Jesus had spoken these things, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And in the action of blessing them he was parted from them in the midst of the day, a shining cloud receiving him out of their sight; that is, this brilliant cloud encompassed him about and carried him up to heaven, not suddenly, but at leisure, that they might behold him departing, and see the proof of his having come down from heaven as he had promised them. (John xvi. 28.)

The cloud in which the blessed Jesus ascended was more bright and pure than the clearest lambent flame, being no other than the Shechinah, or glory of the Lord, the visible symbol of the Divine Presence which had so often appeared to the patriarchs of old, which filled the temple at its dedication, and which, in its greatest splendour, cannot be beheld with mortal eyes; for which reason it is called the light inaccessible in which the Almighty resides.

As he ascended, the flaming cloud that surrounded him marked his passage through the air, but gradually lost its magnitude in the eyes of those who stood below, till at last it vanished, together with their beloved Master, out of their sight; for he was received up where the Deity manifests himself in a peculiar manner, and was set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, all power in heaven and in earth being now given him; and this universal government he will hold till he establishes the dominion of righteousness, when he will deliver up the

kingdom to God, even the Father, "that God might be all in all."

In this illustrious manner did the great Redeemer of mankind depart, after having finished the grand work which he left the bosom of his Father to execute; a work which God himself, in the remotest eternity, contemplated with pleasure, which angels with joy descried was to happen, and which, through all eternity to come, shall, at periods the most immensely distant from the time of its execution, be looked back upon with inexpressible delight by every inhabitant in heaven; for though the minute affairs of time may vanish altogether and be lost when they are removed far back by the endless progression of duration, this object is such that no distance, however great, can lessen it. The kingdom of heaven is erected on the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the kingdom and city of the Almighty comprehending all the people of God in the universe, made happy by goodness and love, and therefore none of them can ever forget the foundation on which their happiness stands established. The human species in particular, recovered by the labour of the Son of God, will view their deliverer, and look back on his stupendous undertaking, with the highest rapture, while they are feasting without interruption on its delicious fruits. The rest of the members likewise of the city of God will contemplate it with perpetual pleasure, as the happy means of recovering their kindred that were lost, and possibly the grand confirmation of the whole rational system in their subjection to him who reigneth for ever, and whose favour is better than life itself.

Thus have I followed our dear Redeemer through all the transactions of his life, and enlarged on the stupendous miracle of his resurrection, as the whole Christian doctrine is founded on that glorious event. And from this history it is abundantly evident that our blessed Saviour showed himself to his disciples and friends only, not to the Jews in general. This circumstance gave Spinoza a pretence for raising an objection which his disciples have considered as the strongest argument against our Lord's resurrection. "If," say they, "he really rose from the dead, to have showed himself to his enemies as well as to his friends would have put the truth of his resurrection beyond all doubt, than which nothing could be more necessary to the cause of Christianity," and therefore the supposition of his having confined his appearances after his resurrection to a few select friends renders the affair extremely suspicious and improbable.

But this argument, however plausible it may appear at first sight, is destitute of the least force, because it may be demonstrated that if Jesus had showed himself to his enemies, and to all the people in general, these appearances, instead of putting the truth of his resurrection beyond

all doubt, would have weakened the evidence of it, at least in after ages, and consequently have been of infinite prejudice to mankind; for, upon the supposition that our blessed Saviour had showed himself openly, one of these two things must necessarily have happened — either his enemies, submitting to the evidence of their senses, would have believed his resurrection; or, resisting that evidence, they would reject it altogether. I shall begin with considering the latter.

Those enemies of the great Redeemer of mankind who resisted the evidence of their senses, or who, though really convinced, would not acknowledge their conviction, must have justified their disbelief by affirming that the person who appeared to them as risen from the dead was not Jesus whom the Roman governor had crucified, but an impostor who personated him. On any other foundation their infidelity would have been ridiculous and absurd; but if the unbelieving Jews, by our Lord's appearing personally to them, would have been laid under a necessity of denying the reality of his resurrection, even though persuaded of it in their own minds, the evidence of the fact could have gained nothing by such public appearances, because the generality of the Jews were not capable of passing a judgment upon the falsehood which Christ's enemies must have made use of to support their denial of his resurrection. Being unacquainted with Jesus, they could not certainly tell whether he was really the very person whom the Romans had crucified. His apostles, disciples, and acquaintance, who, by their long attendance on him, knew his stature, shape, air, voice, and manner, were the only proper persons by whose determination the point in dispute could be decided; consequently, if our Lord had appeared to all the people, if any considerable number of his enemies had continued in their infidelity, the whole stress of the evidence of his resurrection must have rested on the evidence of the very persons who, according to the plan pitched upon by Providence, bear witness to it now, and upon whose testimony the world has believed it; so that, instead of gaining an additional evidence by the proposed method of showing Jesus publicly to all the people, we should have had nothing to trust to but the testimony of his disciples, clogged with this encumbrance—that his resurrection was denied by many to whom he appeared, and who were not convinced thereby.

But, in the second place, it may be supposed that, in case our blessed Saviour had shown himself publicly, the whole nation of the Jews must have believed, and that future generations would thus have had the fullest evidence of the truth of his resurrection.

This, however, will not appear to be the case if we consider that the greatest part of our Lord's enemies

had not given themselves the trouble of attending him often, and cannot be supposed to have been so well acquainted with his person as to know him with certainty; for which reason, though he had shown himself to them, even their belief of his resurrection must in a great measure have depended on the testimony of his disciples and friends. If so, it is not very probable that his appearing publicly would have had any great effect on the Jews to persuade them to embrace a crucified Messiah. It is far more reasonable to believe that they would have rejected the whole, and continued in their infidelity.

But to give the argument all the force the deists can desire, let us suppose that, in consequence of our blessed Saviour's appearing to all the people of the Jews, the nation in general would have been convinced of the truth of his resurrection, and become his disciples: what advantage would the cause of Christianity have reaped from such effects of our Lord's public appearance? Would the evidence of his resurrection have become thereby the more unquestionable? or would the modern infidels have been the better disposed to believe in this crucified Jesus? By no means; for we do not find that men of this class are at all the more ready to believe the miracles of Moses in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, because the whole nation were witnesses of them. The truth is, had our blessed Redeemer persuaded all the people of the Jews by appearing personally to them, the objections against his resurrection would have been ten times more numerous and forcible than they are at present; for would not the whole have been called a state trick, a Jewish fable, a mere political contrivance to patch up their broken credit, after they had so long talked of a Messiah who was to come at that time? Besides, we should certainly have been told that the government being engaged in the plot, a fraud of this kind might easily have been carried on, especially as the people in general would eagerly fall in with it, because it was so exactly adapted to their prejudices, and because the few who had sagacity enough to detect the fraud could have no opportunity of examining into it; or, if they did examine and detect the fraud, would not have dared to make any discovery of it in opposition to the whole weight of the state, so that they would let it pass quietly, without once calling it in question.

To say the truth, the resurrection of our great Redeemer, universally believed among the Jews, and published to the world by the unanimous voice of the nation, would have been liable to an infinite number of objections, which are all effectually cut off by the scheme made choice of by the wisdom of Providence; for, as the people in general and the rulers in particular continued in their infidelity, the persons concerned in this supposed fraud must have car-

ried it on under the greatest disadvantages.

The reason is that, instead of making many friends to assist them, which a fraud of this kind requires, all men were their enemies, and interested to discover the cheat. The Jewish rulers, in particular, gave all possible encouragement to make the strictest scrutiny into the fact, and into all its circumstances; and many, doubtless zealously, made the inquiry with the utmost exactness. The apostles, who preached the resurrection, exposed themselves to the fiercest resentment of the men in power, because the resurrection of our great Redeemer cast the greatest reflection upon those who had put him to death. It should also be remembered that, if the generality of the nation had not continued in their unbelief, the apostles, who preached the resurrection, would not have suffered those persecutions which in every country were raised against them, chiefly by the Jews, and consequently one of the strongest arguments for the truth of their testimony would have been wanting; whereas, by their having been persecuted to death for their preaching the resurrection of their great Master, they fully demonstrated how sincerely they believed the great fact which they preached in continual jeopardy of their lives.

Thus have I endeavoured to answer, in the plainest and most satisfactory manner, the principal objection made by the deists against the truth of our blessed Saviour's resurrection, and shall conclude this chapter with a few reflections on the life of the blessed Jesus—a life the greatest and best that was ever led by man, or was ever the subject of any history since the universe was called from its original chaos by the powerful word of the Almighty.

The human character of the blessed Jesus, as it results from the accounts given of him by the evangelists (for they have not formally drawn it up), is entirely different from that of all other men whatsoever; for whereas they have selfish passions deeply rooted in their breasts, and are influenced by them in almost everything they do, Jesus was so entirely free from them that the most severe scrutiny cannot furnish one single action in the whole course of his life wherein he consulted his own interest only. No, he was influenced by very different motives: the present happiness and eternal welfare of sinners regulated his conduct; and while others followed their respective occupations, Jesus had no other business than that of promoting the happiness of the sons of men. Nor did he wait till he was solicited to extend his benevolent hand to the distressed. He went about doing good, and always accounted it more blessed to give than to receive, resembling God rather than man. He went about doing good; benevolence was the very life of his soul; he not only did good to objects presented to him for relief, but he industriously sought them out in order to extend his compassionate assistance.

It is common for persons of the most exalted faculties to be elated with success and applause, or dejected by censure and disappointments; but the blessed Jesus was never elevated by the one, nor depressed by the other. He was never more courageous than when he met with the greatest opposition and cruel treatment; nor more humble than when the sons of men worshipped at his feet.

He came into the world inspired with the grandest purpose that ever was formed—that of saving from eternal perdition, not a single nation, but the whole world; and in the execution of it went through the longest and heaviest train of labours that ever was sustained, with a constancy and resolution on which no disadvantageous impression could be made by any accident whatever. Calumny, threatenings, bad success, with many other evils constantly attending him, served only to quicken his endeavours in this glorious enterprise, which he unweariedly pursued, even till he finished it by his death.

The generality of mankind are prone to retaliate injuries received, and all seem to take a satisfaction in complaining of the cruelties of those who oppress them, whereas the whole of Christ's labours breathed nothing but meekness, patience, and forgiveness, even to his bitterest enemies, and in the midst of the most excruciating torments. The words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," uttered by him when his enemies were nailing him to the cross, fitly express the temper which he maintained through the whole course of his life, even when assaulted by the heaviest provocations. He was destined to sufferings here below, in order that he might raise his people to honour, glory, and immortality in the realms of bliss above, and therefore patiently, yea, joyfully, submitted to all that the malice of earth and hell could inflict. He was vilified that we might be honoured; he died that we might live for ever and ever.

To conclude. The greatest and best men have discovered the degeneracy and corruption of human nature, and shown them to have been nothing more than men; but it was otherwise with Jesus. He was superior to all the men that ever lived, both with regard to the purity of his manners and the perfection of his virtues. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners.

Whether we consider him as a teacher or as a man, "he did no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth." His whole life was perfectly free from spot or weakness; at the same time, it was remarkable for the greatest and most extensive exercises of virtue. But never to have committed the least sin in word or in deed, never to have uttered any sentiment that could be censured upon the various topics of religion and morality which were the daily subjects of his discourses, and that through the course of a life filled with action, and led under the obser-

vation of many enemies, who had always access to converse with him, and who often came to find fault, is a pitch of perfection evidently above the reach of human nature, and consequently he who possessed it must have been Divine.

Such was the person who is the subject of the evangelical history. If the reader, by reviewing his life, doctrine, and miracles, as they are here represented to him united in one series, has a clearer idea of these things than before, or observes a beauty in his actions thus linked together, which, taken separately, do not appear so fully; if he feels himself touched by the character of Jesus in general, or with any of his sermons and actions in particular, thus simply delineated in writing, whose principal charms are the beauties of truth; above all, if his dying so generously for men strikes him with admiration, or fills him with joy in the prospect of that pardon which is thereby purchased for the world, let him seriously consider with himself what improvement he ought to make of the Divine goodness.

Jesus, by his death, hath set open the gates of immortality to the sons of men; and by his word, Spirit, and example graciously offers to make them meet for the glorious rewards in the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, and to conduct them into the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us therefore remember that, being under the dispensation of his gospel, we have, from our earliest years, enjoyed the best means of securing to ourselves an interest in that favour of God which is life, and that loving-kindness which is better than life.

We have been called to aspire after an exaltation to the nature and felicity of the Almighty, exhibited to mortal eyes in the man Christ Jesus, to fire us with the noblest ambition. His gospel teaches us that we are made for eternity, and that our present life is to our future existence as infancy is to manhood. But as in the former many things are to be learned, many hardships to be endured, many habits to be acquired, and that by a course of exercises which in themselves though painful and possibly useless to the child, yet are necessary to fit him for the business and enjoyments of manhood; so, while we remain in this infancy of human life, things are to be learned, hardships to be endured, and habits to be acquired by a laborious course of discipline, which, however painful, must be undergone, because necessary to fit us for the employments and pleasures of our riper existence in the realms above, always remembering that whatever our trials may be in this world, if we ask for God's assistance, he has promised to give it.

Inflamed, therefore, with the love of immortality and its joys, let us submit ourselves to our Heavenly Teacher, and learn of him those graces which alone can render life pleasant, death desirable, and fill eternity with ecstatic joys.

CHAPTER XLV.

Remarks on the peculiar nature of the Christian religion, the principles it inculcates, and its fitness to render men holy and humble here, and happily glorified hereafter.

WE cannot close the delightful scene of the life of our dear Lord and Saviour more comfortably than by considering the benefits resulting therefrom to all who shall by faith receive and embrace the same.

Probably none have been greater enemies to the progress of religion than those who delineate it in a gloomy and terrifying form, nor guilty of a more injurious calumny against the gospel than those who represent its precepts as rigorous impositions and unnecessary restraints.

True religion is the perfection of human nature, and the foundation of uniform exalted pleasure, of public order and private happiness. Christianity is the most excellent and the most useful institution, having the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is the voice of reason; it is also the language of Scripture; the ways of wisdom "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and our blessed Saviour himself assures us that his precepts are easy, and the burden of his religion light.

The Christian religion is a rational service, a worship in spirit and truth, a worship worthy of the majesty of the Almighty to receive, and of the nature of man to pay. It comprehends all we ought to believe, and all we ought to practise; its positive rites are few, of plain and easy significancy, and manifestly adapted to establish a sense of our obligations to God and Christ.

The gospel places religion not in abstruse speculation and metaphysical subtleties, not in outward show and tedious ceremony, not in superstitious austerities and enthusiastic visions, but in purity of heart and holiness of life. The sum of our

duty, according to our great Master himself, consists in the love of God and of our neighbour; according to St. Paul, in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world; according to St. James, in visiting the fatherless and widows in affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. This is the constant strain and tenor of the gospel. This it inculcates most earnestly, and on this it lays the greatest stress.

But is the Christian scheme only a republication of the law of nature, or merely a refined system of morality? No, certainly; it is a great deal more. It is an act of grace, a stupendous plan of Providence, designed for the recovery of mankind from a state of degradation and ruin to the favour of the Almighty, and to the hopes of a happy immortality through a Mediator.

Under this dispensation, true religion consists in a repentance towards God, and in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the person appointed by the Supreme Authority of heaven and earth to reconcile apostate man to his offended Creator—as a sacrifice for sin, our vital head, and governing Lord. This is religion, as we are Christians. And what hardship, what exaction is there in all this? Surely none. Nay, the practice of religion is much easier than the servitude of sin.

Our rational powers, all will readily agree, are impaired and the soul weakened by sin. The animal passions are strong, and apt to oppose the dictates of the Spirit of God: objects of sense make powerful impressions on the mind. We are in every situation surrounded with many snares and temptations. In such a disordered state of things, to maintain an undeviating path of duty cannot be effected by poor weak man. There are, however, generous aids afforded us to persevere in the ways of the Lord.

The gracious Author of nature has planted in the human breast a quick sense of good and evil, a faculty which strongly dictates right and wrong; and though, by the strength of appetite and warmth of passion, men are often hurried into immoral practices, yet in the beginning, especially when there has been the advantage of a good education, it is usually with reluctance and opposition of mind. What inward struggles precede, what bitter pangs attend, their sinful excesses! What guilty blushes and uneasy fears! What frightful prospects and pale reviews! Terrors are upon them, and a fire not blown consumeth them. To make a mock at sin, and to commit iniquity without remorse, are attainments that require length of time and much painful labour—more labour than is requisite to attain that habitual goodness which is the glory of the man, the ornament of the Christian, and the chief of his happiness.

The soul can no more be reconciled to acts of wickedness and injustice

than the body to excess, but by suffering many bitter pains and cruel attacks.

The voice of conscience may, indeed, be stopped for awhile by false principles; its secret whispers may be drowned by the noise of company, and stifled by the entertainments of sense; but this principle of conscience is so deeply rooted in human nature, and, at the same time, her voice is so clear and strong, that the sinner's arts will be unable to lull her into a lasting security.

When the hour of calamity arrives, when sickness seizeth and death approaches the sinner, conscience now constrains him to listen to her accusations, and will not suffer the temples of his head to take any rest: "there is no peace to the wicked." The foundations of peace are subverted; they are at utter enmity with their reason, with their conscience, and with their God.

Not so is the case of true religion; for when religion, pure and genuine, forms the tempers and governs the life, conscience applauds, and peace takes her residence in the breast. The soul is in its proper state. There are order and regularity both in the faculties and actions. Conscious of its own integrity, and secure of the Divine approbation, the soul enjoys a calmness not to be described. But why do I call this happy frame calmness only? It is far more than mere calmness. The air may be calm, and the day overcast with thick mists and dark clouds. The pious and virtuous mind resembles a serene day, enlightened and enlivened with the brightest rays of the sun. Though all without may be clouds and darkness, there is light in the heart of a pious man. "He is satisfied from himself, and is filled with peace and joy in believing." In the concluding scene, the awful moment of dissolution, all is peaceful and serene. The immortal part quits its tenement of clay with the well-grounded hopes of ascending to happiness and glory.

Nor does the gospel enjoin any duty but what is fit and reasonable. It calls upon all its professors to practise reverence, submission, and gratitude to God; justice, truth, and universal benevolence to men; and to maintain the government of our own minds. And what has any one to object against this? From the least to the greatest commandment of our dear Redeemer, there is not one which impartial reason can find fault with. "His law is perfect; his precepts are true, and righteous altogether"—not even those excepted which require us to love our enemies, to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross. To forgive an injury is more generous and manly than to revenge it; to control a licentious appetite than to indulge it; to suffer poverty, reproach, and even death itself, in the sacred cause of truth and integrity, is much wiser and better than, by base compliances, to make "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience."

Thus in a storm at sea, or a conflagration on the land, a man with

pleasure abandons his lumber to secure his jewels. Piety and virtue are the wisest and most reasonable things in the world; vice and wickedness the most irrational and absurd.

The all-wise Author of our being hath so framed our natures, and placed us in such relations, that there is nothing vicious but what is injurious; nothing virtuous but what is

advantageous to our present interest, both with respect to body and mind. Meekness and humility, patience, universal charity, and grace give a joy unknown to transgressors.

The Divine virtues of truth and equity are the only bands of friendship, the only supports of society. Temperance and sobriety are the best preservatives of health and strength; but sin and debauchery impair the body, consume the substance, reduce to poverty, and form the direct path to an immature and untimely death. Now this is the chief excellency of all laws, and what will always render their burden pleasant and delightful—that they enjoin nothing unbecoming or injurious.

Besides, to render our duty easy, we have the example as well as the commands of the blessed Jesus. The masters of morality among the heathen gave excellent rules for the regulation of men's manners; but they wanted either the honesty or the courage to try their own arguments upon themselves. It was a strong presumption that the yoke of the scribes and Pharisees was grievous when they laid heavy burdens upon men's shoulders, which they themselves refused to touch with one of their fingers. Not thus our great lawgiver, Jesus Christ the righteous. His behaviour was in all respects conformable to his doctrine. His devotion towards God, how sublime and ardent! his benevolence towards men, how great and diffusive! He was in his life an exact pattern of innocence, for he "did no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth." In the Son of God incarnate is exhibited the brightest, the fairest resemblance of the Father that earth or heaven ever beheld—an example peculiarly persuasive, calculated to inspire resolution, and to animate us to use our utmost endeavours to imitate the Divine pattern,

the example of "the Author and Finisher of our faith, of him who loved us, and gave himself for us." Our profession and character as Christians oblige us to make this example the model of our lives. Every motive of decency, gratitude, and interest constrains us to tread the paths he trod before us.

We should also remember that our burden is easy, because God, who "knoweth whereof we are made, who considereth that we are but dust," is ever ready to assist us. The heathen sages themselves had some notions of this assistance, though guided only by the glimmering lamp of reason. But what they looked upon as probable the gospel clearly and strongly asserts. We there hear the apostle exhorting, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." We there hear the blessed Jesus himself arguing in this convincing manner: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

I would not here be understood to mean that the agency of the Spirit is irresistible, and lays a necessitating bias on all the faculties and affections. Where this is the case, precepts and prohibitions, promises and threatenings, would signify nothing, and duty and obligation would be words without a meaning. The Spirit assisteth in a manner agreeable to the frame of human nature, not controlling the free use of reason, but by assisting the understanding, influencing the will, and moderating the affections. But though we may not be able to explain the mode of his operations, the Scriptures warrant us to assert that when men are renewed and prepared for heaven, it is through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. How enlivening the thought! how encouraging the motive! We are not left to struggle alone with the difficulties which attend the practice of virtue in the present imperfect state. The merciful Father of our spirits is ever near to help our infirmities, to enlighten the understanding, to strengthen good resolutions, and, in concurrence with our own endeavours, to make us conquerors over all opposition. Faithful is he to his promises, and will not suffer the sincere and well disposed to be tempted above what they are able to bear. What can be desired more than this? To promote the happiness of his people everything is done that is requisite; his grace is all-sufficient; his Spirit is able to conduct us, through this vale of tears, to never-fading bliss.

We should also remember that the great doctrine of the gospel concerning the propitious mercy of God to all penitents through Christ Jesus greatly contributes to the consolation of Christians. Let it be granted that the hope of pardon is essential to the religion of fallen creatures, and one of its first principles; yet, consider-

ing the doubts and suspicions which are apt to arise in a mind conscious of guilt, it is undoubtedly a great, an inestimable favour to be relieved in this respect by a messenger from Omnipotence himself. This is our happiness. We are not left to depend upon consequential reasonings, which the bulk of mankind are little used to; but we are assured that upon our true repentance we shall, through the mediation of Christ, receive the full remission of past sins, and be restored to the same state and favour with our Maker as if we had never transgressed his laws. Here the gospel triumphs. With these assurances it abounds. Upon this head the declarations of our blessed Saviour and his apostles are so express and full, that every one who believes them, and knows himself to be a true penitent, must banish every doubt and fear, and rejoice with joy unspeakable. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." (Matt. xii. 31.) "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) "The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin." (John i. 17.) What grace and favour is this! Who can dwell upon the transporting theme too long? Now our way is plain before us, and the burden we are to bear is made easy. No sins are unpardonable if repented and forsaken.

Consider this, all ye who have never yet regarded religion, but pursued a course of vice and sensuality all your lives long—though your conduct has been base to the last degree, your case is not desperate: far from it. The God whom you have so highly offended commiserates your errors, is ever ready to extend his pardoning mercy to his most degenerate creatures upon their faith and repentance, and "is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto penitent sinners their trespasses." (2 Cor. v. 10.) "Let the wicked therefore forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord," who will so liberally extend his mercy to him, "and to our God, who will thus abundantly pardon." (Isaiah lv. 7.)

Another particular which renders the Christian religion delightful is its leading us to the perfect eternal life of heaven. It cannot be denied but that we may draw from the light of nature strong presumptions of a future state. The present existence does not look like an entire scene, but rather like the infancy of human nature, which is capable of arriving at a much higher degree of maturity; but whatever solid foundation the doctrine of a future state may have in nature and reason, certain it is, through the habitual neglect of re-

flection and the force of irregular passions, this doctrine was, before the coming of our blessed Saviour, very much disfigured, and in a great measure lost among the sons of men.

In the heathen world a future state of rewards and punishments was a matter of mere speculation and uncertainty, sometimes hoped for, sometimes doubted of, and sometimes absolutely denied. The law of Moses, though of Divine origin, is chiefly enforced by promises of temporal blessings; and even in the writings of the prophets a future immortality is very sparingly mentioned and obscurely represented; but the doctrine of our Saviour hath brought life and immortality to light. In the gospel we have a distinct account of another world, attended with many engaging circumstances, about which the decisions of reason were dark and confused. We have the testimony of the Author of our religion, who was raised from the dead, and who afterwards, in the presence of his disciples, ascended into heaven. In the New Testament it is expressly declared that good men, when absent from the body, are present with the Lord. Here we are assured of the resurrection of the body in a glorious form, clothed with immortal vigour suited to the active nature of the animating spirit, and assisting its most enlarged operations, and incessant progress towards perfection. Here we are assured that the righteous shall go into life everlasting; that they shall enter into the kingdom of the heavenly Canaan, where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, no vice disturb the will. In these regions of perfection nothing but love shall possess the soul, nothing but gratitude employ the tongue. There the righteous shall be united to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born. There they shall see their exalted Redeemer at the right hand of Omnipotence, and sit down with him on his throne. There they shall be admitted into the immediate presence of the Supreme Fountain of life and happiness, and, beholding his face, be changed into the same image, from glory to glory. Here language, here imagination, fails me! It requires the genius, the knowledge, and the pen of an angel to paint the happiness, the blissful scene of the New Jerusalem, which human eyes cannot behold till this mortal body shall be purified from its corruption, and dressed in the robes of immortality. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive the joys which God hath prepared for them that love him."

What is the heaven of the heathen compared with the heaven of the Christians? The hope, the prospect of this is sufficient to reconcile us to all the difficulties that may attend our progress, sweeten all our labours, alleviate every grief, and silence every murmur.

But why, says the libertine, in the gaiety of his heart, should there be

any difficulties or restraint at all? God hath made nothing in vain. The appetites he hath planted in the human breast are to be gratified. To deny or restrain them is ignominious bondage; but to give full scope to every desire and passion of the heart, without check or control, is true manly freedom.

In opposition to this loose and careless way of reasoning, let it be considered that the liberty of a rational creature doth not consist in an entire exemption from all control, but in following the dictates of reason as the governing principle, and in keeping the various passions in due subordination. To follow the regular motion of those affections which the wise Creator hath implanted within us is our duty; but, as our natural desires in this state of trial are often irregular, we are bound to restrain their excesses, and not to indulge them but in a strict subserviency to the integrity and peace of our minds, and to the order and happiness of human society established in the world. They who allow the supreme command to be usurped by sense and brutal appetite may promise themselves liberty, but are truly and absolutely the servants of corruption. To be vicious is to be enslaved. We behold with pity those miserable objects that are chained in the galleys, or confined in dark prisons and loathsome dungeons; but much more abject and vile is the slavery of the sinner. No slavery of the body is equal to the bondage of the mind; no chains press so closely or gall so cruelly as the fetters of sin, which corrode the very substance of the soul, and fret every faculty.

It must, indeed, be confessed that there are some profligates so hardened by custom as to be past all feeling, and, because insensible of their bondage, boast of this insensibility as a mark of their native freedom and of their happiness. Vain men! they might extol with equal propriety the peculiar happiness of an apoplexy, or the profound tranquillity of a lethargy.

Thus have I endeavoured to place in a plain and conspicuous light some of the peculiar excellencies of the Christian religion; and from hence many useful reflections will naturally arise in the mind of every attentive reader. It is the religion of Jesus that hath removed idolatry and superstition, and brought immortality to light, when concealed under a veil of darkness almost impenetrable. This hath set the great truths of religion in a clear and conspicuous point of view, and proposed new and powerful motives to influence our minds and to determine our conduct. Nothing is enjoined to be believed but what is worthy of God; nothing to be practised but what is friendly to man. All the doctrines of the gospel are rational and consistent; all its precepts are truly wise, just, and good. The gospel contains nothing grievous to an ingenuous mind; it debars us from nothing but doing harm to our-

selves or to our fellow-creatures; and permits us to range anywhere but in the paths of danger and destruction. It only requires us to act up to its excellent commands, and to prefer to the vanishing pleasure of sin the smiles of a reconciled God and an eternal weight of glory. And is this a rigorous exaction, a heavy burden not to be endured? How can sinful mortals harbour so unworthy a thought?

Surely no man who is a real friend to the cause of virtue and to the interest of mankind can ever be an enemy to Christianity if he truly understands it, and seriously reflects on its wise and useful tendency. It conducteth us to our journey's end by the plainest and most secure path, where the "steps are not straitened, and where he that runneth stumbleth not." Let us, who live under this last and most gracious dispensation of God to mankind, "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," and not suffer ourselves, by the slight cavils of unbelievers, to be "moved away from the hope of the gospel." Let us demonstrate that we believe the superior excellency of the Christian dispensation by conforming to its precepts. Let us show that we are Christians in deed and in truth; not by endless disputes about trifles, and the transports of a blind zeal, but by abounding in those "fruits of righteousness which are through Christ to the praise and glory of God."

From what has been said we may clearly perceive how groundless all those prejudices are which some conceive against religion, as if it was a peevish, morose scheme, burdensome to human nature and inconsistent with the true enjoyment of life. Such sentiments are too apt to prevail in the heat of youth, when the spirits are brisk and lively, and the passions warm and impetuous; but it is wholly a mistake, and a mistake of the most dangerous tendency. The truth is, there is no pleasure like that of a good conscience—no real peace but what results from a sense of the Divine favour. This ennobles the mind, and can alone support it under all the various and unequal scenes of the present state of trial. This lays a sure foundation of an easy, comfortable life, of a serene, peaceful death, and of eternal joys and happiness hereafter; whereas vice is ruinous to all our most valuable interests, spoils the native beauty and subverts the order of the soul, renders us the scorn of man, the rejected of God, and, without timely repentance, will rob us of a happy eternity. Religion is the health, the liberty, and the happiness of the soul. Sin is the disease, the servitude, and the destruction of it.

If this be not sufficient to convince you, let me lead you into the chamber of an habitual rioter, the lewd debauchee, worn out in the cause of iniquity, his bones full of the sin of his youth, that from his

own mouth, as he lies on his expiring bed, you may learn that the way of transgression is hard; and that, however sweet sin may be in the commission, it strikes like a serpent, and bites like an adder.

I am going, reader, to represent to thee the last moments of a person of high birth and spirit, of great parts and strong passions, every way accomplished, nor the least in iniquity.

His unkind treatment was the death of a most amiable wife; and his monstrous extravagance, in effect, disinherited his only child. And surely the death-bed of a profligate is next in horror to that abyss to which it leads. It has the most of hell that is visible upon earth, and he that has seen it has more than faith to confirm him in his creed. I see it now, says the worthy divine from whom I shall borrow this relation; for who can forget it? Are there in it no flames and furies? You are ignorant, then, of what a scared imagination can figure—what a guilty heart can feel. How dismal is it! The two great enemies of soul and body, sickness and sin, sink and confound his friends, silencing and darkening the shocking scene. Sickness excludes the light of heaven, and sin its blessed hope. Oh, double darkness! more than Egyptian—acutely to be felt!

The sad evening before the death of that noble youth whose last hours suggested these thoughts I was with him. No one was there but his physician and an intimate acquaintance whom he loved, and whom he had ruined. At my coming he said—

"You and the physician are come too late. I have neither life nor hope. You both aim at miracles. You would raise the dead."

Heaven, I said, was merciful.

"Or I could not," he replied, "have been thus guilty. What has it not done to bless and to save me? I have been too strong for Omnipotence. I plucked down ruin."

I said, "The blessed Redeemer—"

"Hold! hold!" he exclaimed, "you wound me! This is the rock on which I have split! I denied his name."

Refusing to hear anything from me, or take anything from the physician, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock struck. Then he cried out with vehemence, "Oh, time, time! It is fit thou shouldst thus strike thy murderer to the heart. How art thou fled for ever! A month! Oh, for a single week! I ask not for years, though an age were too little for the much I have to do."

On my saying to him we could not do too much; that heaven was a blessed place: "So much the worse," said he; "'tis lost! 'tis lost! Heaven is to me the severest part of hell!"

Soon after I proposed prayer, to which he objected, saying, "Pray you that can; I never prayed. I cannot pray; nor need I. Heaven is on my side already. It closes

with my conscience. Its severest strokes but second my own."

His friend being much touched, even to tears, at this (for who could forbear? I could not), with a most affectionate look he said—

"Keep these tears for thyself. I have undone thee. Dost thou weep for me? That's cruel. What can pain me more?"

Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.

"No," exclaimed he; "stay. Thou still mayst hope: therefore hear me. How madly have I talked! How madly hast thou listened and believed! But look on my present state as a full answer to thee and to myself. This body is all weakness and pain; but my soul, as if strung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason, full mighty to suffer; and that which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality is doubtless immortal. And as for a Deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict the pains I feel."

I was about to congratulate this passive, involuntary confession in his asserting the two prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack of nature, when he thus very passionately added—

"No, no! let me speak on. I have not long to speak. My much-injured friend! my soul, as my body, lies in ruins, in scattered fragments of broken thought. Remorse for the past throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no rest. Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flame that is not an everlasting flame, that is not an unquenchable fire."

How were we struck! yet soon after, still more. With what an eye of distraction, what a face of despair, he cried out, "My principles have poisoned my friend; my extravagance has beggared my boy; my unkindness has murdered my wife! And is there another hell? Oh, thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God! Hell itself is a refuge if it hides me from thy frown."

Soon after his understanding failed; his terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgotten; and before the sun (which I hope has seen few like him) arose, this gay, young, noble, ingenuous, accomplished, and most wretched mortal expired.

It must, indeed, be owned it sometimes happens that men who have led very wicked lives have gone out of the world as they have lived in it, defying conscience and deriding a future judgment as an idle fiction; but these instances are very rare, and only prove that there are monsters in the moral as well as in the natural world.

It will perhaps be said that the sons of vice and riot have pleasure in sensual indulgences. Allowed; but it is altogether of the lowest kind, empty, fleeting, and transient. "Like

the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the mirth of the wicked." It makes a noise and a blaze for the present, but soon vanishes away in smoke and vapour.

On the other hand, the pleasure of religion is solid and lasting, and will attend us through all, even the last stages of life. When we have passed the levity of youth, and have lost our relish for the gay entertainments of sense; when old age steals upon us, and stoops us towards the grave, this will cleave fast to us, and give us relief. It will be so far from terminating at death, that it then commences perfect, and continually improves with new additions.

Clad in this immortal robe, we need not fear the awful summons of the king of terrors, nor regret our retiring into the chambers of the dust. Our immortal part will wing its way to the arms of its Omnipotent Redeemer, and find rest in the heavenly mansions of the Almighty; and though our earthly part, this tabernacle of clay, return to its original dust, and is dissolved, our joy, our consolation, our confidence is, that "we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

En-Rogel, from the South.

THE LIVES OF THE APOSTLES.

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THE LIVES OF THE APOSTLES.

ST. PETER.

CHAPTER I.

An account of his life prior to his call to the apostleship of the blessed Jesus.

THE apostle Peter was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, situate on the banks of the Lake of Genesareth, called also the Sea of Galilee, from its being situated in that country, and the Lake of Tiberias, from that city being built on its banks. But the particular time of this great apostle's birth cannot be known, the evangelists and other writers among the primitive Christians having been silent with regard to this particular. It is, however, pretty certain that he was at least ten years older than his Master: the circumstances of his being married and in a settled course of life when he first became a follower of the great Messiah, and that authority and respect the gravity of his person procured him among the rest of the apostles, sufficiently declare this conjecture to be very near the truth.

As he was a descendant of Abraham, he was circumcised according to the rites of the Mosaic law, and

called by his parents Simon, or Simeon, a name common at that time among the Jews. But, after his becoming a disciple of the blessed Jesus, the additional title of Cephas was conferred upon him by his Master, to denote the firmness of his faith; the word *cephas*, in the Syriac, the common language of the Jews at that time, signifying a stone or rock; and thence he is called, in Greek, Petros, and by us Peter, which implies the same thing.

With regard to the parents of St. Peter the evangelists have also been silent, except in telling us that his father's name was Jonah, who was highly honoured by our blessed Saviour, who chose two of his sons, Andrew and Peter, to be his apostles and preachers of the glad tidings of salvation to the children of men.

St. Peter, in his youth, was brought up to the trade of fishing on the Lake of Bethsaida, famous for different kinds of fish, which excelled all others

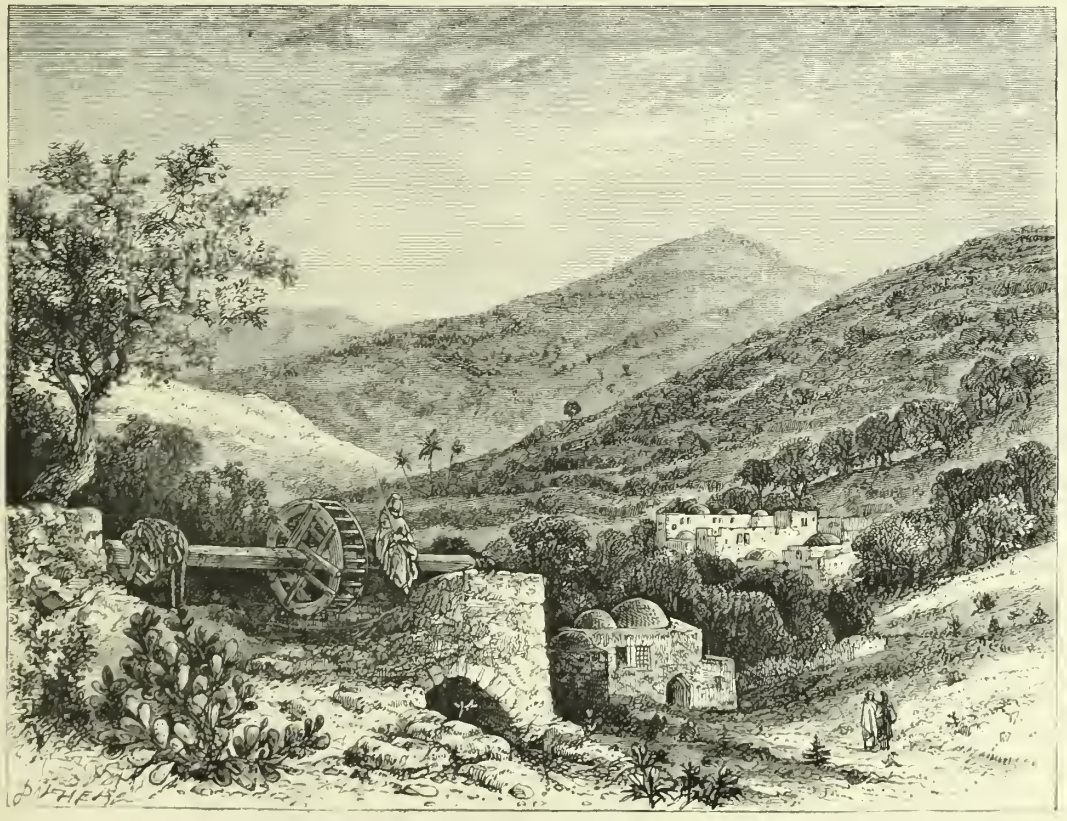
The Jordan.

in the fineness of their taste. Here he followed his trade of fishing, but afterwards removed to Capernaum, where he settled; for we find he had a house there when our Saviour began his public ministry, and there he paid tribute. Nicephorus tells us that Helen, the mother of Constantine, erected a beautiful church over the ruins of St. Peter's house, in honour of that apostle.

Capernaum was as well situated as Bethsaida for carrying on his trade, standing at the influx of the Jordan into the Sea of Galilee, and where he might with equal advantage reap the fruit of an honest and industrious diligence. The business of Peter was both mean and servile; it exposed him to all the injuries of the weather, the tempestuousness of the sea, and the darkness and horror of the night, and all to acquire a mean livelihood for himself and family. But mean-

ness of worldly degree is no obstacle to the favour of God. Nay, if we review the state of Christianity from its rise to the present period, we shall find that its friends and votaries consist rather of persons of humble and lowly stations in life than of the great, the dignified, and the opulent.

And herein are manifested the wise and admirable methods made use of by Divine Providence, in making choice of such mean and unlikely instruments in planting and propagating the Christian religion in the world. Men who were destitute of every advantage of education, and brought up to the meanest employments, were chosen to confound the wise and overturn the learning of the prudent. Such were the persons whom the Almighty sent to propagate the religion of his Son; to silence



Valley of the Jordan.

the wise, the scribe, and the disputer of this world; and to make foolish the wisdom of the earth. For though the Jews required a sign, and the Greeks sought after wisdom; though the preaching of a crucified Saviour was a scandal to the former, and foolishness to the learned latter; yet by this foolishness of preaching God was pleased to save them that believed, and in the event made it appear that "the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than men:" that so the honour of all may redound to himself, that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he that glorieth should glory in the Lord.

CHAPTER II.

The manner by which Peter arrived to the knowledge of the blessed Jesus, and of his call to the discipleship.

SACRED history hath not ascertained of what sect the apostle was. We know, indeed, that his brother Andrew was a follower of the Baptist, that preacher of repentance and forerunner of our Lord; and it is very unlikely that he, who was so ready to carry his brother the early tidings of the Messiah, that

John the Baptist reproving Herod.

the Sun of Righteousness was already risen in those parts, should not be equally solicitous to bring him under the discipline and influences of John the Baptist, the day-star which appeared to usher in the appearance of the Son of God. Besides, Peter's great readiness and curiosity, at the first news of Christ's appearing, to come to him and converse with him, show that his expectations had been awakened, and some

glimmering rays of hope conveyed to him by the preaching and ministry of John, who was the "voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

He became acquainted with the immaculate Lamb of God in the following manner:—The blessed Jesus, having spent thirty years in the solitudes of a private life, had lately been baptized by John in Jordan, and there owned by the solemn attestation of heaven to be the Son of God; whereupon he

The Baptism.

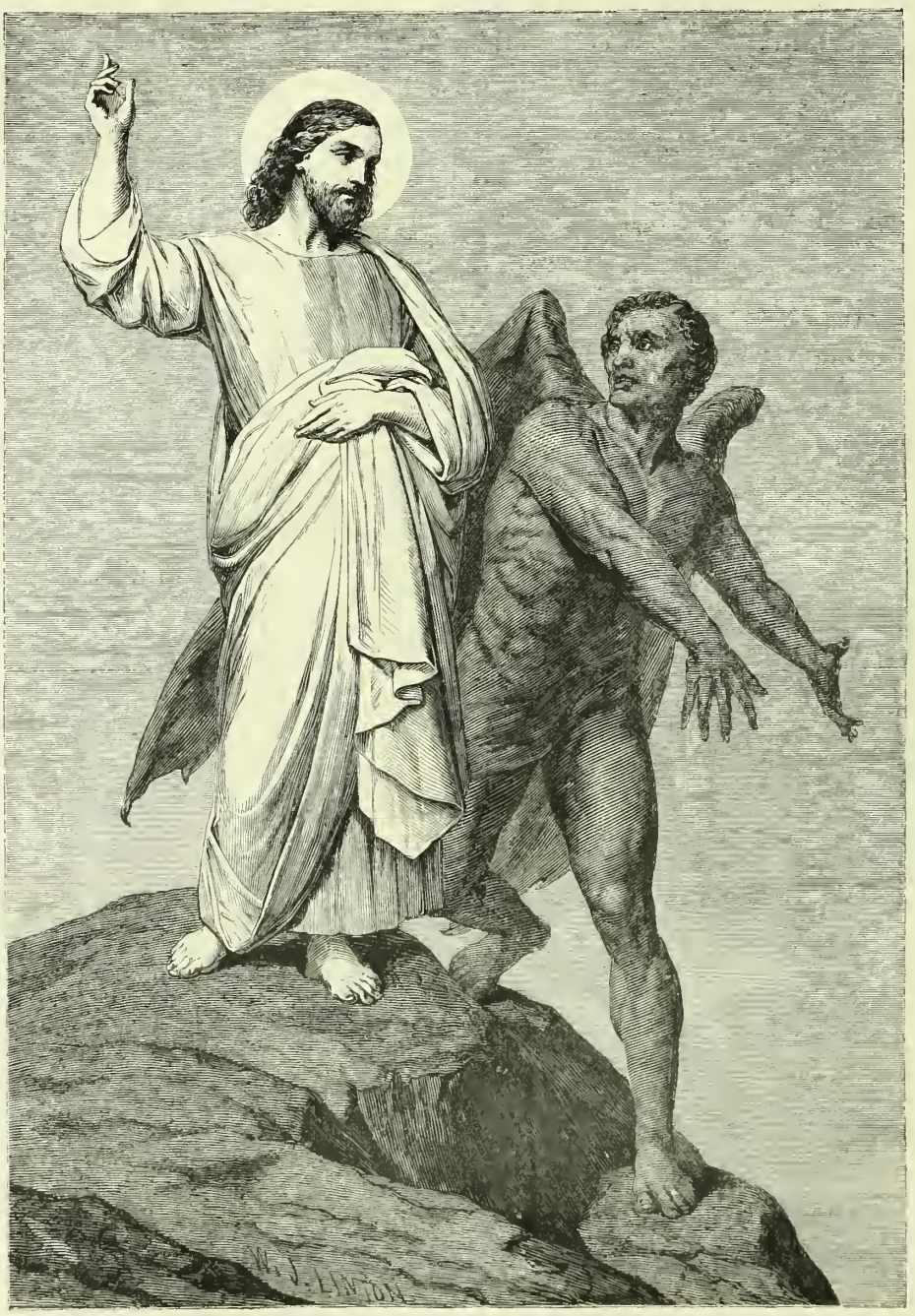
was immediately hurried into the wilderness, and there for forty days maintained a personal contest with the devil. But, having conquered this great enemy of mankind, he returned to "Bethabara beyond Jordan," where John was baptizing his proselytes, and endeavouring to answer the Jews, who had sent a deputation to him to inquire concerning this new Messiah that appeared among them. To satisfy these curious inquirers of Israel, John faithfully related everything he knew concerning him, gave him the greatest character, and soon after pointed him out to his disciples, upon which two of them presently followed the great Redeemer of mankind, one of whom was Andrew, Simon's brother.

Nor did he conceal the joyful discovery he had made, for early in the morning he hastened to acquaint his brother Simon that he had found the Messiah. It is not enough to be happy alone; grace is a communicative principle, that, like the circles in the water, delights to multiply itself and to diffuse its influences all around, especially on those whom nature has placed nearest to us. I have, said he with rapture to his brother, found that eminent person so long and signally foretold by the prophets, and whom all the devout and pious among the sons of Jacob so earnestly expected.

Simon, who was one of those who waited for redemption in Israel, ravished with this joyful news, and impatient of delay, presently followed his brother to the place; and, on his arrival, our blessed Saviour immediately gave him a proof of his Divinity, saluting him at first sight by his name, and telling him both who he was, his name and kindred, and what title should soon be conferred upon him.

But whether these two sons of Jonah constantly attended in person from that time on the great Redeemer of mankind, and became his disciples, the sacred history is silent. It is, however, probable that they stayed with him some time,

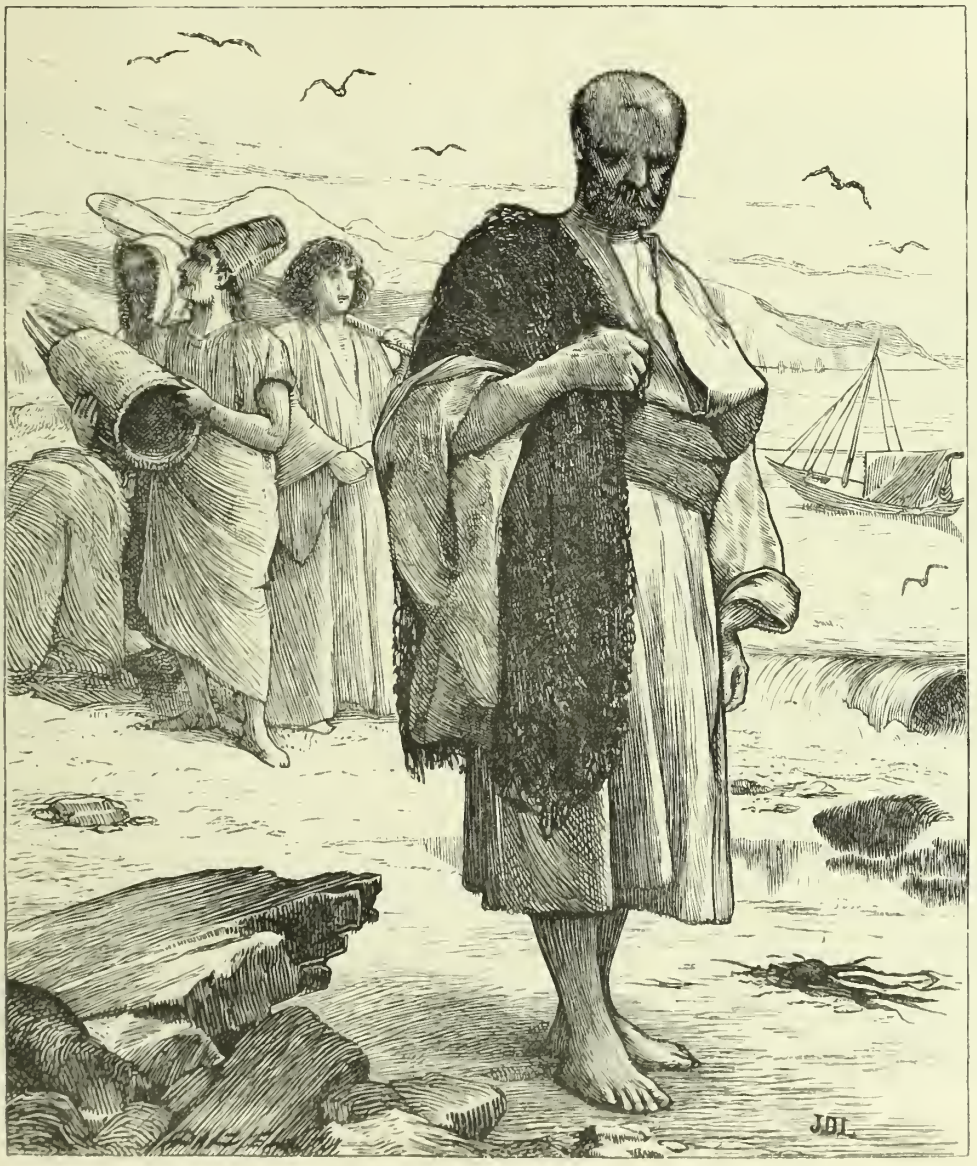
till they were instructed in the first rudiments of his doctrine, and then, by the leave of their great and benevolent Master, returned to their families and to their callings; for it is reasonable to suppose that the blessed Jesus was not at this time willing to waken the jealousy of the



The Temptation.

rulers of Israel and the suspicion of the Romans by a numerous retinue, and therefore dismissed his disciples, and among the rest Andrew and Peter, who returned to their trade of fishing on the lake, and where our blessed Redeemer afterwards found them.

The holy Jesus had now more than a year entered on his public ministry, going into every part of the country to seek opportunities of doing good to the children of men; so that, by the constancy of his preaching and the reputation of his miracles, his fame was spread throughout all Judea, and multitudes of people flocked to him from all parts, to hear his doctrine and be spectators of his mighty works.



Simon Peter goes fishing.

But, to avoid this prodigious throng of people, our great Redeemer often retired to some solitary place to indulge the privacies of contemplation. In one of these retreats, on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, the multitude found him out, and ran to him from the city. Our Saviour, therefore, to avoid the crowd, stepped into a fishing-boat which lay near the shore, and belonged to Simon Peter, who, toge-

ther with his companions, was on shore, drying his nets after an unsuccessful night spent in toil and labour. The blessed Jesus, who might have commanded, was pleased to entreat Peter, who now returned to his boat, to thrust off a little from the land, that he might instruct the people who were gathered in prodigious crowds on the borders of the lake.

Peter gladly complied with the request of his Master, who delivered his heavenly doctrine to the people on the shore. As soon as he had ended his discourse he resolved to

Jesus preaching to the Poor.

seal his miracle, that the people might be persuaded he was a teacher come from God. Accordingly he ordered Simon to row further from the shore, and cast his net into the sea; to which Simon answered that they had laboured the preceding night, and had taken nothing, and, if they could not then succeed, there were little hopes of it now, as the day was far less proper for fishing than the night. But, as his Master was pleased to command, he would obey, and accordingly he let down his net, when, to the astonishment both of himself and of his com-

panions, so great a multitude of fishes were enclosed, that they were obliged to call their partners to their assistance. Amazed at this miraculous draught of fishes, Simon Peter, in an ecstasy of admiration blended with awe and humility, fell prostrate at his Master's feet, acknowledging himself a vile and sinful person, and, thinking himself unworthy of being admitted into the presence of one so immediately sent from God, prayed the blessed Jesus to depart from him. But the compassionate Son of the Most High kindly removed his fears, telling him that this miracle was wrought to confirm his faith, and indicate to him that the Almighty had appointed a more noble employment for him—that of saving the souls of the children of men.

From this time Peter and his companions became the inseparable and constant disciples of the great Messiah, submitting themselves to the rules of his discipline, and living under his institutions.

Soon after our blessed Saviour returned to Capernaum with his disciples, where they found the mother-in-law of Peter dangerously ill of a fever. But the compassionate Jesus, who never omitted any opportunity of doing good to the human race, rebuked the disease, and, taking her by the hand, restored her in a moment to her former health, demonstrating at once not only his power, but his willingness, to relieve the sons and daughters of affliction.

CHAPTER III.

Peculiar transactions of this apostle from the time of his being elected to the last Passover of his blessed Master.

THE blessed Jesus, having entered upon his important mission, thought proper to elect some peculiar persons from among his followers to be constant witnesses of his miracles and doctrines, and who, after his departure, might be intrusted with the care of building his church, and planting that religion in the world for which he himself left the mansions of heaven and put on the veil of immortality. In order to this he withdrew privately, in the evening, to a solitary mountain, where he spent the night in solemn addresses to his Almighty Father for rendering the great work he was going to undertake prosperous and successful.

Early the next morning the disciples came to him, out of whom he made choice of twelve to be his apostles and the constant attendants on his person. These he afterwards invested with the power of working miracles, and sent them into different parts of Judea, in order to carry on with more rapidity the great work which he himself had so happily begun.

All the evangelists, in their enumeration of these apostles, constantly place St. Peter first. But we must not on that account suppose that St. Peter was invested with any personal

prerogative above his brethren; none of them ever intimated any such thing, and St. Paul says expressly that he himself was not inferior to the very chiefest apostle.

Soon after this election, the blessed Jesus, attended by Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, followed Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, to his house, in order to restore his daughter, an only child, who lay at the point of death; but, before their arrival, a messenger arrived with the news that the damsel was dead, and therefore it was unnecessary for our Saviour to give himself any further trouble. But our blessed Saviour bid the ruler not despair, for, if he believed, his daughter should yet be restored to her former health; and accordingly,

Jesus walking on the Sea.

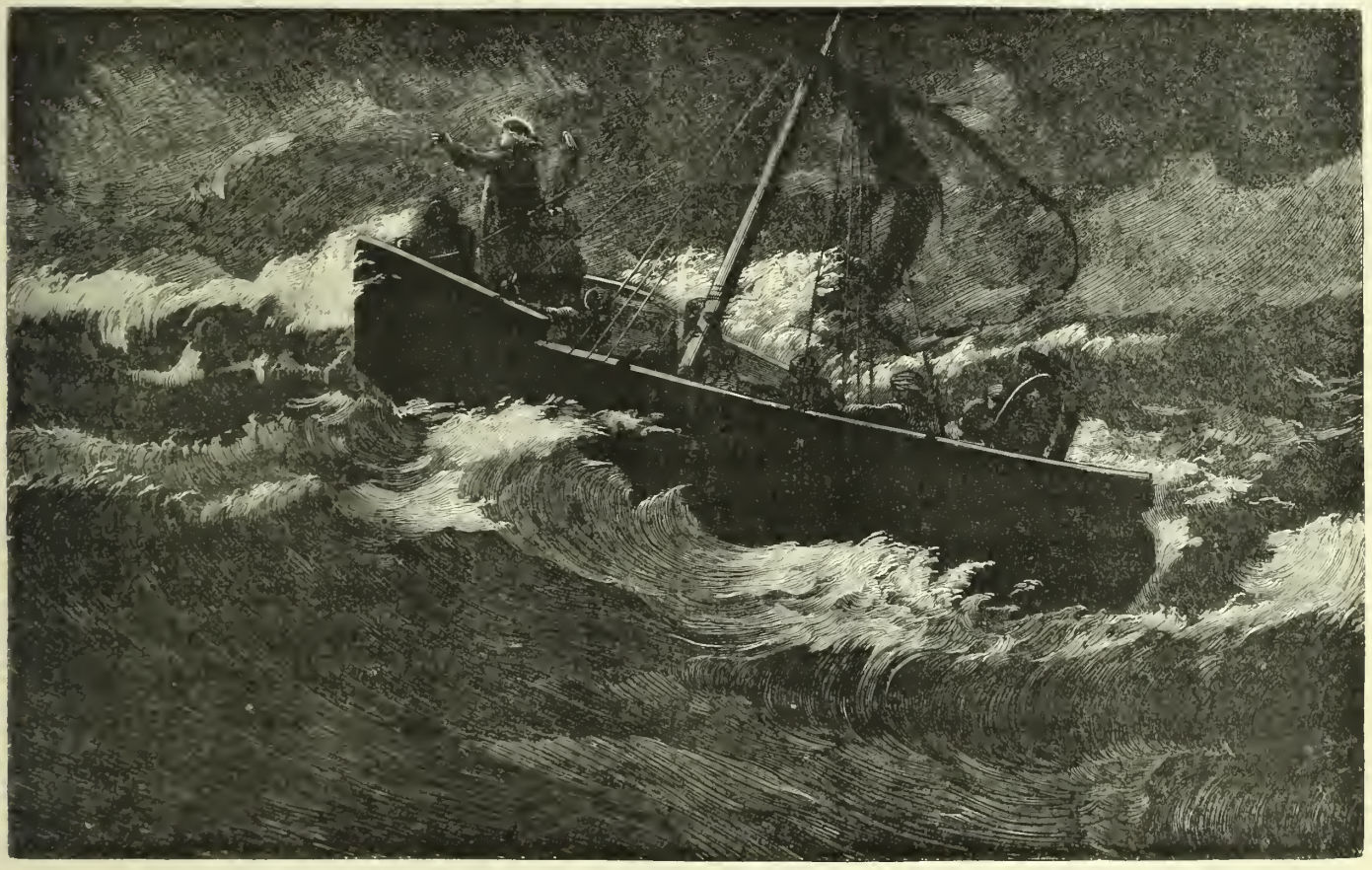
on his arrival, he took the maid by the hand, and with the power of a word recalled her fleeting spirit which had quitted its earthly tabernacle, and restored her again to life and health.

We have no further account of St. Peter in particular till the night after our Saviour's miraculously feeding the multitude in the wilderness. Jesus had ordered his disciples to take ship and pass over to the other side while he sent the multitude away. But a violent storm arising, they were in great danger of their lives, when their great Master came unto them, walking on the surface of the boisterous billows

with the same ease as if it had been dry ground.

At his approach the disciples were greatly terrified, supposing they had seen a spirit. But their compassionate Master soon dispelled their fears, by telling them it was he himself, and therefore they had no reason to be terrified.

Peter, who was always remarkable for bold resolutions, desired his Master to give him leave to come to him on the water, and, on obtaining permission, he left the ship and walked on the sea to meet his Saviour. But when he heard the deep roar around him, and the waves increase, he began to be afraid, and, as his



Christ rebuking the Winds.

faith declined, his body sank in the water, so that, in the greatest agony, he called for assistance to him who was able to save. Nor was his cry in vain; the compassionate Redeemer of mankind stretched out his hand, and again placed him on the surface of the water, with this gentle reproof: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And no sooner had the blessed Jesus and his disciple entered into the ship than the winds ceased, the waves subsided, and the ship was at the land whither they were going.

A miracle of this kind could not

fail of astonishing the disciples, and convincing them of the Divinity of his mission. Accordingly they drew near and worshipped him with this confession: "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

The next day our blessed Saviour entered the synagogue of Capernaum, and, from the miracle of the loaves, took occasion to discourse concerning himself as the true manna, and the bread which came down from heaven, opening to them the more sublime and spiritual mysteries of the gospel; on which great part of the audience, who expected he was going to erect a temporal kingdom, and re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem, offended at his represent-

The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes.

ing his dominion as entirely spiritual, departed from him, and came no more to hear his discourses. Jesus, on beholding this defection, turned himself towards his disciples, and asked them whether they also would go away; to which Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." To whom should we apply for life and salvation? Thou art "the way, the truth, and the life."

The inhabitants of Judea, who beheld with astonishment the miracles wrought by the blessed Jesus, had formed many conjectures concerning him. Our great Redeemer was not ignorant of this, but, being willing to hear what account his disciples would give of the various opinions of the people, asked them what the world said concerning him; to which they replied that some took him for John the Baptist risen from the dead, some thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets. He asked them what they themselves thought of him; to which Peter, in the name of the rest, answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," anointed and set apart by the Most High to be the great King, Priest, and Prophet of Israel.

This full and comprehensive declaration of Peter satisfied the inquiry of our blessed Saviour, who answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;" that is, this faith which thou hast now confessed is not human, or built upon the testimony of man, but upon that knowledge which I was sent from God to reveal unto the world: therefore "I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." As thy name signifies a rock, so shalt thou prove firm, solid, and immovable in building my church, which shall be so firmly established by thy care and

diligence upon the faith thou hast now professed, that all the assaults of men and devils shall not be able to destroy it.

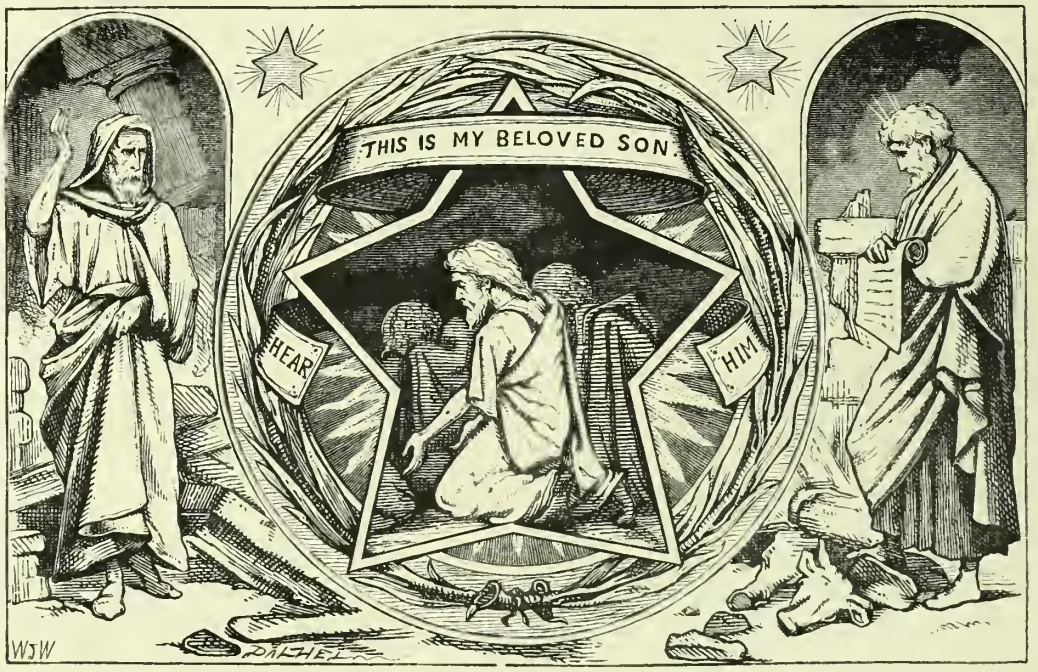
The disciples had no idea that their Master was to suffer death for the sins of the world; on the contrary, they considered him as immortal, having imbibed the opinion of the scribes and Pharisees that "Christ abideth for ever;" so that when the blessed Jesus told them of the sufferings he must undergo at Jerusalem, what affronts and indignities he must suffer, and be at last put to death, with all the acts of torture and disgrace, by a sentence of the Jewish Sanhedrim, Peter, who could not endure the thoughts of his Master's suffering even the least punishment, much less those cruelties he had mentioned, and at last death itself, interrupted him very unseasonably, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." He considered these sufferings as inconsistent with the character of the great Messiah, whom he expected would restore the splendour of the throne of David, his father, and reduce all the kingdoms of the earth to his obedience. But our blessed Saviour, who came down from heaven to give his life a ransom for the sins of the world, and who valued the redemption of mankind infinitely more than his own ease and safety, highly resented this speech of St. Peter, and accordingly returned this sharp reproof: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me." Thy pernicious counsel, in seeking to oppose the design for which I purposely left the courts of heaven, is offensive; and "thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Some time after, the great Redeemer of the souls of men, being to receive a specimen of his future glorification, took with him three of his most intimate apostles, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and went up into a very high mountain; and while they were employed in earnest addresses to the Almighty he was transfigured before them, darting such lustre from his face as exceeded the meridian rays of the sun in brightness; and such beams of light issued from his garments as exceeded the light of the clearest day—an event and sensible representation of that state when the just shall walk in white robes, and shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. During this heavenly scene, the great prophets, Moses and Elias, appeared in all the brightness and majesty of a glorified state, familiarly conversing with him, and discoursing of the death and sufferings he was shortly to undergo, and his ascension to the heavenly regions of bliss and happiness.

In the meantime Peter and the two apostles were fallen asleep; but, on their awaking, were strangely surprised to see their Lord surrounded with so much glory, and those two great persons conversing with him. They, however, remained silent till

those visitants from the courts of heaven were going to depart, when Peter, in a rapture and ecstasy of mind, addressed himself to his Master, declaring their infinite pleasure and delight in being favoured with this glorious spectacle, and desired his leave to erect three tabernacles—one for him, one for Moses, and one for Elias. But while he was speaking a bright cloud overshadowed those two great prophets, and a voice came from it, uttering these remarkable words: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him:" on which the apostles were seized with the utmost consternation, and fell upon their faces to the ground; but Jesus, touching them, bade them dismiss their fears and look up with confidence. They immediately obeyed, but saw their Master only.

After this heavenly scene our



blessed Lord travelled through Galilee, and, at his return to Capernaum, the tax-gatherers came to Peter, and asked him whether his Master was not obliged to pay tribute. When our blessed Saviour was informed of this demand, rather than give offence, he wrought a miracle to pay it. Our great Redeemer was now going for the last time to Jerusalem, and he ordered two of his disciples, probably Peter and John, to fetch him an ass, that he might enter into the city on it, as had been foretold. The disciples obeyed their Master, and brought the ass to Jesus, who being mounted thereon, he entered the city amidst the hosannas of a numerous multitude, with palm-branches in their hands, proclaiming at once both the majesty of a prince and the triumph of a Saviour.

CHAPTER IV.

Life of St. Peter from the time of the celebration of the last Passover to the crucifixion of the great Redeemer.

THE blessed Jesus from Jerusalem repaired to Bethany, from whence he sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to make preparations for his celebrating the Passover.

Everything being ready, our blessed Saviour and his apostles entered the house, and sat down to table. But their great Master, who often taught them by example as well as precept, arose from his seat, laid aside his upper garment, took the towel, and, pouring water into a basin, began to wash his disciples' feet, to teach them humility and charity by his own example. But, on his coming to Peter, he would by no means admit his Master to perform so mean and condescending an office. What! the Son of God stoop to wash the feet

The Holy Sacrament.

of a sinful mortal!—a thought which shocked the apostle, who strenuously declared, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But the blessed Jesus told him that, if he washed him not, he could have no part with him, insinuating that this action was mystical, and signified the remission of sins and the purifying virtue of the Spirit of the Most High, to be poured upon all true Christians. This answer sufficiently removed the scruples of Peter, who cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Wash me in every part, rather than let me lose my portion in thee.

The blessed Jesus, having set them this pattern of humility, began to reflect on his approaching sufferings, and on the person who should betray him into the hands of wicked and cruel men, telling them that not a

stranger or an enemy, but one of his friends, one of his apostles, and even one of them who then sat at table with him, would betray him.

This declaration exceedingly affected them all in general, and Peter in particular, who made signs to St. John, then lying on the bosom of his beloved Master, to ask him particularly who it was. Jesus complied with this request, and gave them to understand that it was Judas Iscariot.

Our great Redeemer now began the institution of his supper, that great and solemn institution which he resolved to leave behind him, to be constantly celebrated in his church, as a standing monument of his love in dying for mankind, telling them, at the same time, that he himself was now going to leave them, and that whither he went they could not come. Peter, not well understanding what he meant, asked him whither he was going; to which our great Redeemer replied that he was going to that place whither he could not now, but should hereafter follow him, intimating the martyrdom he was to suffer for his Master's religion. Peter answered that he was ready now to follow him, even if it required him to lay down his life. This confident presumption was not at all agreeable to the blessed Jesus, who told him he had promised great things, but would be so far from performing them, that before the cock crew twice—that is, before three in the morning—he would thrice deny his Master.

Supper being now ended, they sung a hymn, and departed to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus again put them in mind how greatly the things he was going to suffer would offend them; to which Peter replied that though all men should be offended because of him, yet he himself would never be offended. How far will an indiscreet zeal and affection transport even a good man into vanity and presumption! Peter questions the fidelity of others, but never doubts his own, though his Lord had just before reproved him for his self-sufficiency. This confidence of Peter inspired the rest of the apostles with courage, so that they declared their constant and unshaken adherence to their Master.

They now repaired to the garden of Gethsemane; and leaving the rest of the apostles near the entrance, our blessed Saviour, taking with him Peter, James, and John, retired into the most solitary parts of the garden, to enter on the preparatory scene of the great tragedy that was now approaching.

Here the blessed Jesus laboured under the bitterest agony that ever human nature suffered, during which he prayed with the utmost fervency to his Father, offering up "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears;" "and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." While our great Redeemer was thus interceding with the Almighty, his three disciples were fallen asleep, though he had made three several visits to them, and,

calling to Peter, asked him if he could not watch one hour with him, advising them all to watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation, adding, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

What incomparable sweetness, what generous candour, did the Redeemer of mankind display on this occasion! He passed the most charitable censure upon an action which malice and ill-nature would have painted in colours as black as the shades of darkness.

The disciples were drowned in a profound security, and were buried in a deep sleep. Though often awaked and informed of the approaching tragedy, they little regarded the admonitions, as if nothing but ease and softness engaged their thoughts—an action which seemed to imply the most amazing ingratitude, and the highest disregard for their Lord and Master.

But He who was compassion itself would not impute it to their want of affection or disregard for his safety: he considered it merely as the effect of their infirmities, and made an excuse for them when they could make

Aceldama and the Valley of the Son of Hinnom from the North-east.

none for themselves, teaching us the useful lesson of putting the most favourable construction on the actions of others, and to imitate the bee, and not the spider, by sucking honey, instead of poison, from the various transactions of human life.

While he was discoursing with them, a band of soldiers from the chief priests and elders, preceded by the traitor Judas to conduct and direct them, rushed into the garden, and seized the great High Priest of our profession. Peter, whose ungovernable zeal would admit of no restraint, drew his sword, and, without the least order from his Master, struck at one of the persons who seemed to be remarkably busy in binding Jesus, and cut off his right ear. This wild and unwarrantable zeal was very offensive to his Master, who rebuked Peter, and entreated the patience of the soldiers while he miraculously healed the wound.

But now the fidelity of the apostles, which they had urged with so much confidence, was put to the trial. They saw their Master in the hands of a rude and inconsiderate band of men,

and therefore should have exerted their power to release him, or at least have been the companions of his sufferings, and endeavoured, by every kind endearing action, to have lessened his grief. But alas! instead of assisting or comforting their Master, they all forsook him and fled.

The soldiers who had bound Jesus led him away, and delivered him to the chief priests and elders, who carried him from one tribunal to another; first to Annas, and then to Caiaphas, where the Jewish Sanhedrim were assembled, in order to try and condemn him.

In the meantime, Peter, who had followed the other disciples in their flight, recovered his spirits, and, being encouraged by his companion St. John, returned to seek his Master, and seeing him led towards the high priest's hall, followed at a distance to know the event; but, on his coming to the door, was refused admittance, till one of the disciples, who was acquainted there, came out, and prevailed upon the servant who kept the door to let him in. Peter, being admitted, repaired to the fire burning in the middle of the hall, round which the officers and servants were standing, where, being observed by the maid-servant who let him in, she charged him with being one of Christ's disciples; but Peter publicly denied the charge, declaring that he did not know him, and presently withdrew into the porch, where he heard the cock crow —an intimation seemingly sufficient to awaken his conscience into a quick sense of his duty, and the promise he had a few hours before made to his Master. But alas! human nature, when left to itself, is remarkably frail and inconstant. This Peter sufficiently experienced; for, while he continued in the porch, another maid met him, and charged him with being one of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, which Peter firmly denied, and, the better to gain belief, ratified it with an oath.

About an hour after this the servant of the high priest, he whose ear Peter had cut off, charged him with being a disciple of Christ, and that he himself had seen him in the garden with him, adding that his very speech sufficiently proved that he was a Galilean. Peter, however, still denied the fact; and, to add the highest accomplishment to his sin, ratified it not only by an oath, but by a solemn curse and execration, that he was not the person—that he knew not the man. But no sooner had he uttered this denial than the cock crew, at which his Master turned about and earnestly looked upon him, a look that pierced him to the heart, and brought to his remembrance what his Saviour had more than once foretold —that he would basely and shamefully deny him. Peter was now no longer able to contain his sorrow; he flew from the palace of the high priest, and wept bitterly, passionately bewailing his folly and the aggravations of his sin.

This fall of St. Peter should convince us of the miserable frailty even

of the best men, and effectually subdue those vain confidences which are apt to rise in our hearts, from our own supposed strength and virtue. For, as this great disciple fell in so scandalous a manner, who shall hereafter dare to depend upon the highest degree of knowledge, when one so wise, so perfectly satisfied of the truth of the Christian doctrine, was, after the fullest convictions of his own conscience, so weak and frail as to deny and abjure his Lord, who instructed and bought him, even at the price of his own blood? Who shall presume upon his best resolutions, when he who declared so firm a purpose of adhering to Jesus did, within a few hours, peremptorily and solemnly disown that very person for whose sake he was lately ready and disposed to lay down his life? We ought, therefore, on all occasions, to pray for and rely on the Divine assistance, which alone can enable us to stand in a day of trial. There is, indeed, no reason to doubt that Peter at that time spoke the very sense of his soul; that he had an honest and sincere heart, was steadfastly determined, and, as he thought, able to perform what, with so much piety and affection, he intended and professed. But his misfortune was, that he did not consider the infirmities of human nature, promising, in the warmth of zeal, more than he was able to perform. He relied on his own integrity, thinking good resolutions a sufficient defence against the most violent temptations. But when the assault was made, and danger, with her terrifying aspect, appeared, the event sufficiently proved that how willing soever the spirit might be, yet the flesh was exceedingly frail and weak.

We have in St. Peter a sad experiment for our instruction. The opinion of his own strength proved his ruin. So dangerous and fatal is it to lean on our own understandings; to be wise, good, and safe in our own conceits, when all our sufficiency, all our safety, is of God.

We should also, from this example, remember the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty, in causing the faults and infirmities of his saints to be recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and the use we ought to make of their failings and temptations. Their eminent perseverance in the cause of Christ, and their as eminent repentance where they did amiss, are written as a seasonable warning, and exhibit an instance of humiliation to all future ages, by letting us see that the most perfect are but men, subject to blemishes and imperfections, and that the highest and purest state is no security from danger. This should make us very tender how we judge and despise our brethren, whose faults, however severely we may censure them, might probably have been our own, had we been in their circumstances; for "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." We should not then promise ourselves safety and freedom from temptations in any circumstances of

life, or think we are incapable of committing the blackest crimes, should the Almighty withdraw his grace and leave us to ourselves.

And as their failings admonish, so they also should comfort us, by demonstrating that God does not suddenly cast off his servants when they have heinously offended him; that we ought not to despair, though our transgressions are great and many; for, if we will return with true contrition of soul, we shall be kindly received and freely pardoned. Those who fall with

The Watch at the Sepulchre.

Peter should earnestly pray for that repentance which he had—a repentance which needeth not to be repented of.

CHAPTER V.

An account of what befell this apostle from the resurrection of his blessed Master to his ascension into heaven.

IT is certain, from various circumstances, that Peter, after the crucifixion of his Lord and Master, stayed at Jerusalem, or at least in the neighbourhood; for, when Mary Magdalene returned from the sepulchre to inform the disciples that the stone was rolled away from the door and the body not to be found, Peter and John set out immediately towards the garden. John, who was the younger, arrived at the sepulchre, looked into it, but did not enter, either out of

fear or reverence to his Saviour. Peter came soon after, and resolutely went into the sepulchre, where he found the linen clothes lying together in one place, and the napkin that was about his head wrapped together in another—a sufficient indication that the body was not stolen away, for, had that been the case, so much care and order would not have been observed in disposing of the linen clothes.

But Peter did not wait long in suspense with regard to his great Lord and Master, for the same day Jesus appeared to him, and as he was the first of the disciples who

The Good Samaritan.

had made a signal confession of the Divinity of the Messiah's mission, so it was reasonable he should first see him after his resurrection; at the same time to convince him that the crime he had been guilty of in denying him was pardoned, and that he was come, like the good Samaritan, to pour oil into his wounded conscience.

Soon after the apostles prepared to obey the command of their great Master by retiring into Galilee; and we find that Peter, Nathanael, the

two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples returned to their old trade of fishing on the lake.

One morning early, as they were labouring at their employment, having spent the whole night to no purpose, they saw on the shore a grave person, who called to them, and asked them if they had any meat, to which they answered, No. Cast, then, replied he, the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They

The Good Samaritan.

followed his directions, and enclosed a prodigious number of large fish. Astonished at such remarkable success, the disciples looked one upon another for some time, till St. John told Peter that the person on the shore was doubtless their great Lord and Master, whom the winds, the sea, and the inhabitants of the watery regions were so ready to obey.

Peter no sooner heard the beloved disciple declare his opinion concern-

ing the stranger than his zeal took fire, and, notwithstanding the coldness of the season, girt on his fisher's coat, threw himself into the sea, and swam to shore, his impatience to be with his dear Lord and Master not suffering him to stay the few minutes necessary to bring the ship to land.

As soon as the disciples came on shore they found a fire kindled, and fish laid upon it, either immediately created by the power of their Divine Master, or which came ashore of its own accord, and offered itself to his hand. But, notwithstanding there were fish already on the fire, he ordered them to bring of those they had now caught, and dress them for their repast, he himself eating with them, both to give them an instance of mutual love and friendship, and also to assure them of the truth of his human nature, since he was risen from the dead.

When the repast was ended our blessed Saviour addressed himself particularly to Peter, urging him to the utmost diligence in his care of souls; and because he knew that nothing but a sincere love to himself could support him under the troubles and dangers of so laborious and difficult an employment, he inquired of him whether he loved him more than the rest of the apostles, mildly reproving him for his over-confident resolution. Peter, whom fatal experience had taught humility, modestly answered that none knew so well as himself the integrity of his affections. Thou knowest the hearts of all men, nothing is hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest that I love thee. The question was three several times repeated by our blessed Saviour, and as oftentimes answered by the apostle; it being but just that he who, by a threefold denial, had given so much reason to question his affection, should now, by a threefold confession, give more than common assurance of his sincere love for his Master; and to each of these confessions our great Redeemer added this signal trial of his affection: "Feed my sheep." Instruct and teach them with the utmost care and the utmost tenderness.

The blessed Jesus, having thus engaged Peter to a cheerful compliance with the dangers that might attend the discharge of his office, particularly intimated to him the fate that would attend him, telling him that when he was young he girded himself, lived at his pleasure, and went wherever his fancy directed him; but, when he should reach the term of old age, he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird and bind him, and lead him whither he had no desire to go, intimating, as the evangelist tells us, "by what death he should glorify God."

Peter was well pleased to drink the bitter cup, and make his confession as public as his denial, providing all would be sufficient to atone for his former sin. And seeing John following, he asked his great Master

what should be his fate, and whether he who had been the object of his Master's love in his lifetime should not have as honourable a death as he that had denied him; to which Jesus replied, It doth not concern thee to know how I shall dispose of events with regard to him: he shall see the destruction of the Jewish nation, and then go down to the chambers of the dust in peace.

Not long after our blessed Saviour appeared to his disciples at Jerusalem, to take his last farewell of those who had constantly attended him during his public ministry among the sons of men.

He now led them out as far as Bethany, a small village on Mount Olivet, where he briefly told them that they were the persons he had chosen to be the witnesses both of his death and resurrection—a testimony which they should publish in every part of the world; in order to which he would, after his ascension into heaven, pour out his Spirit upon them in an extraordinary manner, that they might be the better enabled to struggle with that violent rage and fury with which the doctrine of the gospel would be opposed by men and devils, adding that in the meantime they should return to Jerusalem, and there wait till those miraculous powers were given them from on high.

Having finished this discourse, he laid his hands upon them, and gave them his solemn benediction, during which he was taken from them, and received up into the regions of the heavenly Canaan. The apostles, who beheld their Master visibly ascend into heaven, were filled with a greater sense of his glory than they had ever been while he conversed with them familiarly on earth; and, having performed their solemn adorations to him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, there to wait for the accomplishment of their great Master's promise. How sudden a change was now wrought in the minds of the apostles! They who were lately overwhelmed with sorrow at the very mention of their Lord's departure

The Ascension.

from them, beheld it now with joy and triumph: they were fully satisfied of his glorious advancement to the right hand of Omnipotence, and of that peculiar care and providence which they were sure he would exercise over them, in pursuance of those great trusts he had committed to their care.

CHAPTER VI.

Transactions of Peter from the ascension of his blessed Master to the dispersion of the church at Jerusalem.

THE apostles, though deprived of the personal presence of their dear Lord and Master, were inde-

fatigable in fulfilling the commission they had received from him. The first object that engaged their attention, after their return to Jerusalem, was to fill up the vacancy in their number lately made by the unhappy fall and apostacy of Judas. In order to this they called together the church, and entered into an upper room, when Peter, as president of the assembly, proposed to them the choice of a new apostle.

He put them in mind that Judas, one of the disciples of their great and beloved Master, being betrayed by his covetous and insatiable temper, had lately fallen from the honour of his place and ministry; that this was no more than what the prophet had long since foretold should come to pass, and that the care of the church which had been committed to him should devolve upon another; that therefore it was highly necessary that some person who had been familiarly conversant with the blessed Jesus, from first to last, and consequently a competent witness both of his doctrine and miracles, his death, resurrection, and ascension, should be substituted in his room.

This, indeed, was highly requisite, for, as no evidence is so valid and satisfactory as the testimony of an eye-witness, as the apostles all along principally insisted on this, that they delivered nothing to the world, concerning the great Redeemer of mankind, which they themselves had not seen and heard; and as his rising from the dead was a principle likely to meet with the greatest opposition, and which would be the most difficult tenet of the gospel to be believed by the sons of men, they urged this great truth incessantly, declaring that they were eye-witnesses of his resurrection, that they had seen and felt him, eaten and familiarly conversed with him, after his return from the chambers of the grave. It was, therefore, highly requisite that such an apostle should be chosen, and accordingly two candidates were proposed —Joseph, called Barsabas, and Matthias, both qualified for the great and important office of the apostleship; and having prayed that the Divine Providence would immediately guide and direct their choice, they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, who was accordingly admitted into the number of the twelve apostles.

After filling up the vacancy in the apostolic number, they spent their time in prayer and meditation till the feast of Pentecost, when the promise of their great Master in sending the Holy Ghost was fulfilled. The Christian assembly were met, as usual, to perform the public services of their worship, when suddenly a sound, like that of a mighty wind, rushed in upon them, representing the powerful efficacy of that Divine Spirit which was now to be communicated to them; after which there appeared small flames of fire, which, in the shape of cloven tongues, descended and sat upon the head of each of them, to denote that their enjoyment of this gift should be con-

stant and perpetual, and not like the prophets of old, who were inspired only at some particular times and seasons; upon which they were all immediately filled with the Holy Ghost, which in an instant enabled them to speak fluently several languages which they had never learned, and probably never heard.

The report of so sudden and strange an action soon spread through every part of Jerusalem, which at that time was full of Jewish proselytes, devout men, out of every nation under heaven:

The Feast of Pentecost.

Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the dwellers in Mesopotamia and Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Libya about Cyrene, from Rome, from Crete, and from Arabia. These no sooner heard of this miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit than they flocked in prodigious numbers to the Christian assembly, where they were amazed to hear these Galileans speaking to them in their own native language, so various and so very different from one another. And it could not fail of exceedingly increasing the wonder to reflect on the meanness of the

speakers, who were neither assisted by genius, polished by education, nor improved by use and custom. The disciples were destitute of all these assistances; their parts were mean, their education trifling, and their experience in speaking before great assemblies nothing. Yet these persons spoke boldly, and with the greatest propriety, in various languages. Nor were their discourses filled with idle stories or the sallies of a luxuriant fancy. No, they expatiated on the great and admirable works of Omnipotence and the mysteries of the gospel, which human apprehension could never discover.

This surprising transaction had different effects on the minds of the audience, some attributing it to the effect of a miracle, and others to the power and strength of new wine; upon which the apostles all stood up, and Peter, in the name of the rest, undertook to confute this injurious calumny.

Nazareth.

He told them that this scandalous slander proceeded from the spirit of malice and falsehood; that their censure was uncharitable, as it was unjust; that it was early in the morning, and therefore not a time for drinking, especially on a day set apart for devotion; that these extraordinary and miraculous effects were but the accomplishment of an ancient prophecy, which the Almighty had expressly declared should be fulfilled in the times of the Messiah; that Jesus of Nazareth had evidently proved himself to be that great Prophet, the Son of the Most High, by many unquestionable miracles, of which they themselves had been eyewitnesses; and though, by the permission of Omnipotence, who had determined by this means to bring about the redemption of mankind, they had wickedly crucified and slain him, yet God had raised him from

the dead. Nor was it consistent with the justice and goodness of the Almighty, especially those Divine predictions made concerning him, that he should be confined in the chambers of the grave, David having particularly foretold that his flesh should rest in hope, that God would not leave his soul in hell, neither suffer his Holy One to see corruption, but would make known to him the way to life; that this prophecy could not relate to David himself, as he had, many ages since, been reduced to dust, and his flesh passed through the different stages of corruption, his tomb being yet visible among them, and from whence he was known never to have returned; and therefore the prophecy must relate to Christ, having never been truly fulfilled in any but him, who both died and was risen again, whereof they were his witnesses. Nay, that he was not only risen from the dead, but ascended into the highest heaven, and, according to David's prediction, sat down on the right hand of God, until he had made his enemies his footstool, which could not be primarily meant of David, as he never ascended bodily into heaven; that therefore the whole house of Israel ought to believe that this very Jesus whom they had crucified was the person whom God had appointed to be the Messiah, the founder of the Christian church, and the Saviour of the world.

This discourse, though the first that St. Peter ever made in public, deeply affected the audience, and every word, like a dagger, pierced them to the heart, so that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" to which Peter answered, The only way to expiate your guilt, obtain pardon for the many sins you have committed, and acquire the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is to repent sincerely, and be baptized into the religion of this crucified Saviour. Upon these terms the promises of the new covenant, ratified by the death of the Son of God, will belong to you and your children, and to all that sincerely believe and embrace the gospel. He also used the most forcible and endearing expressions to prevail on them to listen to the inviting calls of the Son of God, and by that means to save themselves from that unavoidable ruin and destruction which would shortly fall on the heads of the wicked and headstrong generation of unbelieving Jews.

The effect of this discourse was equally wonderful and surprising, for vast numbers of those who before ridiculed the religion of Jesus now acknowledged him for their Saviour, and flew to him for refuge from the impending storm; and St. Luke tells us that there were that day added to the church no less than three thousand souls, who were all baptized and received into the flock of the great Shepherd of Israel, the Bishop of our souls. A quick and plentiful harvest indeed! This was "the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Soon after this wonderful exhibition of the power of the gospel, Peter and John going up to the temple about three in the afternoon, near the conclusion of one of the solemn hours of prayer, they saw a poor impotent cripple, near forty years of age, who had been lame from his birth, lying at the beautiful gate of the temple, and asking alms of those who entered

The Good Shepherd.

the sacred edifice. This miserable object moved their compassion; and Peter, beholding him with attention, said, The riches of this world, the silver and gold so highly coveted by the sons of men, are not in my power to bestow; but I possess the power of restoring life and health, and am ready to assist thee.

Then, taking the man by the hand,

he commanded him, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, to rise up and walk. Immediately his nerves and sinews were enlarged, and the several parts of his diseased members performed their natural functions, upon which the man accompanied them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God.

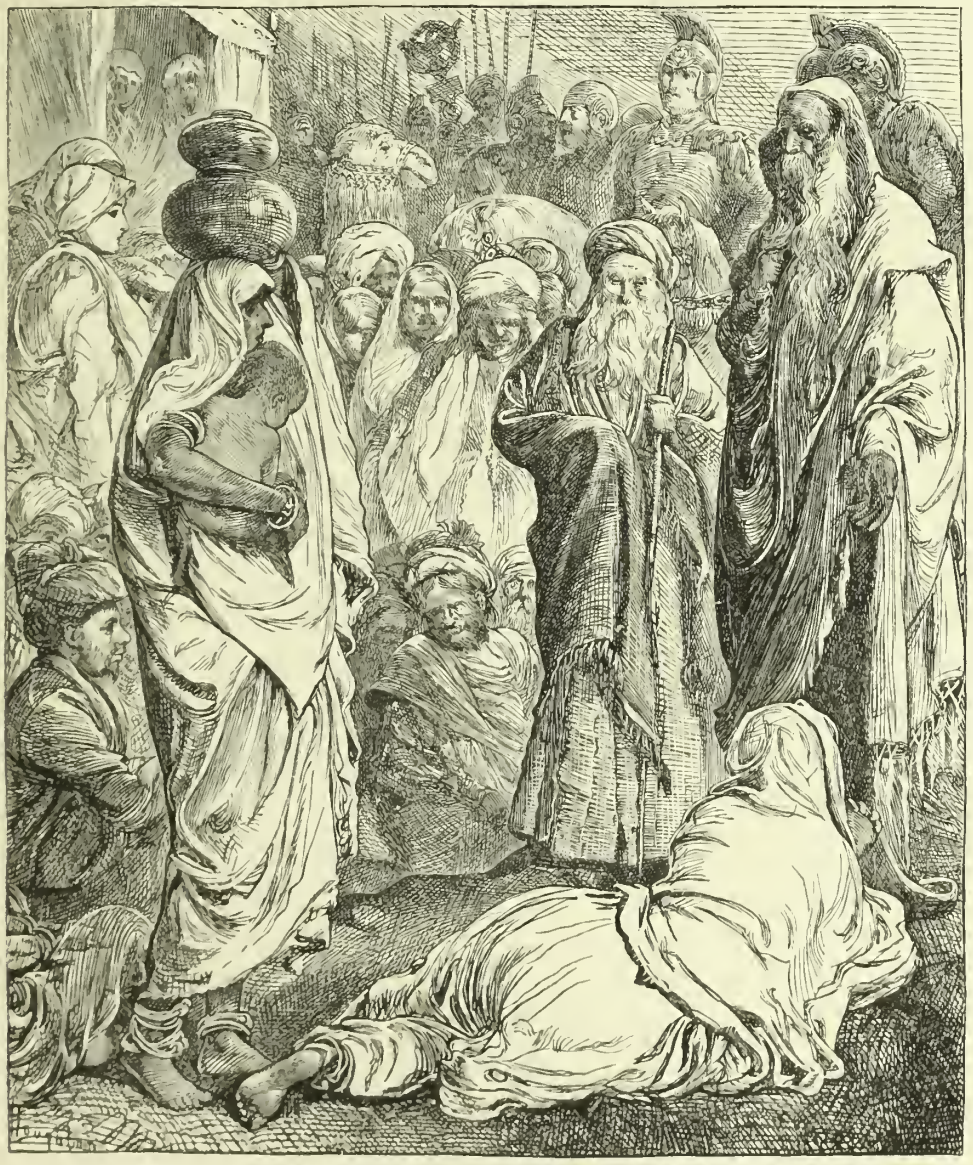
So strange and extraordinary a cure filled the minds of the people with admiration, and their curiosity drew them around the apostles to view the men who had performed it. Peter, seeing the multitude gathering round them, took the opportunity of speaking to them in the following manner:—Men and brethren, this remarkable cure should not excite your admiration of us, as if we had performed it by our own power. It was wrought in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, our crucified Master, by the power of that very Christ, that holy and just person, whom you yourselves denied, and delivered to Pilate; nay, and preferred a murderer before him, when the governor was desirous of letting him go. But though you have put him to death, yet we are witnesses that he hath raised him again from the dead, and that he is ascended into heaven, where he will remain till the great and tremendous day of general restitution. This I know was done by you and our rulers through ignorance, not being thoroughly convinced of the greatness and Divinity of his person—an ignorance by which the great and righteous designs of Omnipotence were brought about, and the prophecies concerning the person and sufferings of the Messiah, delivered by Moses, Samuel, and all the prophets since the world began, have been accomplished. But now it is high time to repent and turn to God, that your crying sins may be forgiven; that when the Messiah shall shortly appear to execute judgment upon the Jewish nation, it may be a time of comfort to you, as it will be of vengeance and destruction to others. You should remember that you are the peculiar persons to whom the blessings and the promises primarily belong, and to whom the Almighty first sent his Son, that he might shower on you his blessings by turning you away from your iniquities.

While Peter was speaking to the people in one part of the temple, John was, in all probability, doing the same in the other, and the success plainly indicated how powerful the preaching of the apostles was, five thousand persons embracing the doctrines of the gospel, and acknowledging the crucified Jesus for their Lord and Saviour.

Such amazing success could not fail of exciting the attention and envy of the rulers of Israel. Accordingly, the priests and Sadducees repaired to the Roman magistrate, and intimated to him that in all probability this concourse of people would prove the cause of a tumult and insurrection. Upon this information the captain of the temple

seized on the apostles, and cast them into prison.

The next day they were carried before the Jewish Sanhedrim; and, being asked by what power and authority they had done this, Peter boldly answered, Be it known unto you, and to all the descendants of Jacob, that this miracle was wrought wholly in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye yourselves have crucified and slain, and whom the Almighty



Apostles preaching.

hath raised again from the dead. This is the stone which you builders refused, and which is become the head of the corner. Nor is there any other way by which you, or any of the sons of men, can be saved, but by this crucified Saviour.

This boldness of the apostle was admired by all, even by the court of the Sanhedrim. And it should be

remembered that these very judges were the persons who had so lately condemned the blessed Jesus himself, and had no other way of justifying their proceedings than by a second act of cruelty; that the apostles did not charge them with the crime of crucifying the Son of God in secret, but in the open court of judicature, and in the hearing of all the people.

The court, after beholding them with a kind of astonishment, remembered that they had seen them with Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore ordered them to withdraw, while they debated among themselves what was proper to be done. It was impossible to deny the miracle; for it was performed before all the people, and the person on whom it was wrought no stranger in Jerusalem. They therefore resolved to charge them strictly not to preach any more in the name of Jesus. Accordingly, they were again called in, and acquainted with this resolution of the council; to which the apostles answered, that as they had received a commission from Heaven to declare to all nations what they had seen and heard, it was certainly their duty to obey God rather than man.

This was a fair appeal to the consciences of their very judges; but these rulers of Israel, instead of being satisfied with it, would, in all probability, have proceeded to a greater violence, had not the people's veneration for the apostles checked their malice; so that all they dared to do was to enforce their menaces and dismiss them.

When the apostles were returned to their brethren, they informed them of the treatment they had met with from the Jewish magistrates; upon which they all joined in prayer to the Almighty for an extraordinary supply of courage and assistance, to enable them to execute their commission in these perilous times, and plant the religion of their crucified Saviour. Nor were their prayers offered in vain; for, before they had concluded their fervent addresses to the throne of grace, the house was again shaken with a mighty wind, as on the day of Pentecost, and they were instantly replenished with fresh measures of the Holy Ghost, and, notwithstanding all the threatenings of the Jewish rulers, found themselves enabled to preach the gospel of their great and beloved Master with more boldness than ever.

The labours of the apostles were crowned with abundant success, and it seems that such was the aversion of the inveterate Jews to those who became converts to the faith of Christ, that they were deprived of business in their respective callings; for we find that the professors of the religion of the holy Jesus sold their estates, and brought the money to the apostles, that they might deposit it in one common treasury, and from thence supply the several exigencies of the church.

But hypocrisy was not unknown among the professors of religion, even

The Death of Ananias

in these primitive times. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, having embraced the doctrines of the gospel, pretended to follow the free and generous spirit of these times, by consecrating and devoting their estate to the honour of God and the necessities of the church. Accordingly, they sold their possessions, and brought part of the money and laid it at the apostles' feet, hoping to deceive them, though guided by the Spirit of Omnipotence. But Peter, at his first coming in, asked Ananias how he could suffer Satan to fill his heart with such enormous wickedness as to think to deceive the Holy Ghost; that, before it was sold, it was wholly in his own power, and afterwards the money entirely at his own disposal; so that his action was capable of no other interpretation than that he had not only abused and injured man, but mocked the Almighty himself, who he must know was privy to his most secret thoughts.

The apostle had no sooner finished than Ananias, to the great terror of all that were present, fell down dead by a stroke from Heaven.

Not long after this his wife came in, whom Peter reproved in the same manner he had done her husband, adding that she should immediately end her life in the same awful manner; upon which she was smitten by the hand of Omnipotence, and fell down dead, sharing with her husband in the punishment, as she had before in the heinous crime. This remarkable instance of severity filled all the converts with fear and trembling, and prevented, in a great measure, that hypocrisy and dissimulation by which others might flatter themselves to deceive the church.

But such instances of severity were very extraordinary: the power of the apostles was generally exerted in works of mercy and beneficence towards the sons and daughters of affliction. They cured all kinds of diseases, and cast out devils, so that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them upon beds and couches, that the shadow at least of Peter, as he passed by, might cover some of them, well knowing that a single touch or word from either of the apostles was sufficient to remove the most inveterate disease.

Such astonishing miracles could not fail of contributing to the propagation of the gospel, and to convince the world that the apostles were far more considerable persons than they at first took them to be, and that poverty and meanness may be blended with true worth and genuine greatness. How small and insignificant are the power and dignity of an earthly monarch, when compared with this glory of the apostles! And how contemptible were the triumphs of a Pompey and a Cæsar, when placed in competition with the greatness and majesty of St. Peter, who converted the world from idolatry and the worship of devils, and withdrew the veil of ignorance from the understandings of the human race, not by the power of armies, nor the insinuating artifices of pomp and

grandeur, but by faith in the power of his Saviour.

But the stupendous works of the apostles and the growing numbers of the church alarmed the rulers of Israel, who seized the apostles and cast them into prison. Their power, however, was limited, and like the drop of a bucket to the ocean, when opposed to the almighty arm of the great Jehovah. The prison doors, though fastened with the utmost caution, opened of themselves at the approach of a messenger from the courts of heaven, who commanded the apostles to leave the dungeon, repair to the temple, and preach the glad tidings of the gospel to the people.

The officers, returning in the morning, found the prison doors shut and guarded, but the prisoners gone. This remarkable circumstance greatly alarmed them, and they repaired to the council to acquaint them with what had happened. The rulers were astonished at the news; but, hearing that the apostles were teaching in the temple, they sent an officer to bring them, with the least violence to their persons, before the Sanhedrim. Their orders were soon obeyed, and the disciples of Jesus placed before the same court that had so lately condemned their Master.

The apostles being thus brought before the Sanhedrim, the high priest asked them how they dared to propagate a doctrine they had lately so strictly charged them not to preach; to which Peter, in the name of the rest, replied, We certainly ought to obey God rather than man; and though you have so barbarously and contumeliously treated the Saviour of the world, yet God hath raised him up to be a Prince and Saviour, to give both repentance and remission of sins. And of these things both we and the miraculous powers which the Holy Ghost hath conferred on all Christians are witnesses.

This answer, delivered with remarkable boldness, exasperated the council, and they began to consult how they might destroy them; but Gamaliel, a grave and learned counsellor, after commanding the apostles to withdraw, desired them to proceed with caution in an affair of this nature, reminding them that several persons had already raised parties, and drawn great numbers of persons after them, but that every one of them had miscarried, and all their designs were rendered abortive, without the interposition of that court; that they would therefore do well to let the apostles alone; for, if their doctrines and designs were of human invention, they would come to nothing, but, if they were of God, all their power and policy would be of no effect, and sad experience would too soon convince them that they had themselves opposed the counsels of the Most High.

This prudent and rational advice had the desired success; the council were satisfied, and, after commanding the apostles to be scourged, they strictly charged them to preach no

The Angel Freeing the Apostles

more in the name of Jesus, and set them at liberty. But this charge had little effect on the disciples of the blessed Jesus; they returned home in triumph, rejoicing that they were thought worthy to suffer in so righteous a cause, and to undergo shame and reproach for so kind and so powerful a Master. Nor could all the opposition of men, blended with the malice of the powers of darkness, discourage them from performing their duty to the Almighty, or lessen their zeal for preaching, both in public and private, the doctrine of the gospel.

CHAPTER VII.

Concluding scenes of St. Peter's life.

THE Christian doctrine had been propagated hitherto without much violence of opposition in Jerusalem, but now a storm commenced with the death of the proto-martyr Stephen; nor did it end but with the dispersion of the disciples, by which means the glad tidings of the gospel, which till now had been confined to Judea (the professors of it hiding in secret places), was preached to the Gentile world, and an ancient prophecy fulfilled, which says, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Thus does the Almighty bring good out of evil, and cause the malicious intentions of the wicked to redound to his praise.

Among the dispersed followers of the blessed Jesus, Philip the deacon retired to Samaria, where he preached the gospel, and confirmed his doctrine by many miraculous cures, and casting out devils. In this city was one Simon, who, by magic arts and diabolical sorceries, was beheld with admiration by the people, and some considered him as the great power of God, a name he blasphemously gave himself, pretending to be the first and chief deity, or what every nation considered as the supreme God.

This wicked mortal, hearing the sermons of Philip, and beholding the miracles wrought by him, became a convert to the religion of Jesus, and was baptized with the others who had embraced the Christian doctrine.

The apostles who continued at Jerusalem were soon informed of this remarkable success of Philip's ministry at Samaria, and thought it necessary to send him assistance. Accordingly, Peter and John were deputed to this infant church, who having prayed and laid their hands on the new converts, they received the Holy Ghost.

Such miraculous gifts astonished the magician, and, desirous of obtaining the same privilege, he offered the disciples money to invest him with this power, that on whomsoever he laid his hands he might receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter, who perceived the insincerity of his heart, rejected his offer with scorn and detestation. "Thy money," said the great apostle, "perish with thee;" and, as thy heart is full of hypocrisy and deceit, thou canst have no share nor portion in so great a privilege.

Thou wouldst do well to repent for so monstrous a crime, and sincerely apply thyself to seek the Almighty, that the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thy temper and disposition of mind are still vicious and corrupt, and that thou art yet bound by the chains of iniquity, and in a state displeasing to the Almighty and dangerous to thyself.

Simon was terrified at this speech of St. Peter; his conscience flew in his face, and he prayed the apostles to make intercession for him to the throne of grace, that the Almighty might pardon his sin, and not inflict on him those heavy judgments.

The apostles did not stay any longer in Samaria than was necessary to confirm the new converts in the faith they had embraced, and to preach the glad tidings of salvation in the adjacent villages, after which they returned to Jerusalem, to assist the rest of the disciples with their power.

The storm, though violent, being at length blown over, the church enjoyed a time of calmness and serenity, during which St. Peter went to visit the churches lately planted in those parts by the disciples whom the persecution had dispersed. And, at his arrival at Lydda, he miraculously healed Æneas, who had been afflicted with the palsy, and confined to his bed eight years; but, on Peter's bidding him rise in the name of Jesus, he was immediately restored to perfect health. Nor was the success of this miracle confined to Æneas and his family: the fame of it was blazed through all the neighbouring country, and many believed in the doctrine of the Son of God. It was even known at Joppa, a seaport town about six miles from Lydda, and the brethren immediately sent for Peter on the following melancholy occasion. Tabitha, whose Greek name was Dorcas, a woman venerable for her piety and extensive charity, was newly dead, to the great loss of all mankind who loved genuine benevolence, especially the poor and afflicted, who were supported by her charity.

At Peter's arrival he found her dressed for the funeral solemnity, and surrounded by mournful widows, who showed the coats and garments wherewith she had clothed them, the monuments of her liberality. But Peter put them all out, and, kneeling down, prayed with the utmost fervency; then, turning the body, he commanded her to arise, and taking her by the hand, presented her in perfect health to her friends and others who were assembled to pay their last duties to so good a woman. This miracle confirmed those who had newly embraced the gospel of Jesus, and converted many more to the faith; after which he stayed a considerable time at Joppa, lodging in the house of one Simon, a tanner.

During his abode in this city, one day when he was offering up his prayers to the Almighty, he found himself hungry, and called for meat; but while it was dressing for him he

fell into a trance, wherein was presented to him a large sheet let down from heaven, containing all sorts of creatures, clean and unclean, and at the same time a voice said to him, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." But

Dorcas.

this apostle, as yet tenacious of the rites and institutions of the Mosaic law, answered that his conscience refused to comply, having never eaten anything that was common or unclean; to which the voice replied that it was unjust to consider that as common which God had cleansed.

This was done thrice, after which the vessel was again drawn up to heaven, and the vision disappeared. By this symbolical representation St. Peter was given to understand that the Almighty was now going to send him on a new embassy, which the Spirit at the same time commanded him to undertake. While he was still wondering with himself what the event would prove, three messengers knocked at the gate, inquiring for him; and from them he received the following account—that Cornelius, a Roman, captain of a band of Italian soldiers at Cæsarea, a person of great piety and religion, one who had been long a proselyte, had, by an immediate command from God, sent for him.

The next day Peter, accompanied

Jaffa, or Yafa, the site of the ancient Joppa.

by some of the brethren, went with the messengers, and the day after arrived at Cæsarea. Cornelius, having information of his coming, had summoned his friends and kindred to Cæsarea; and, at the apostle's entering his house, fell at his feet—a method of address frequent in the eastern countries. But Peter, who considered that honour as due only to the Almighty, lifted him up, and declared to the company the reason of his coming, saying he had lately learned that there was no respect of persons with God.

When the apostle had ended his speech, Cornelius, at his request, related the particular reason for his sending for him. Four days ago, said this Roman officer, being con-

versant in the duties of fasting and prayer, an angel from the courts of heaven appeared to me, declaring that my prayers and alms were come up as a memorial before the throne of the Most High; and at the same time ordered me to send to Joppa for one Simon Peter, lodging in the house of a tanner, near the seaside, who would give me further information in the mysteries of salvation. Accordingly, I made no hesitation to obey the heavenly messenger; I sent immediately for thee; and now thou art come, and we are met together to hear what instructions thou hast to communicate.

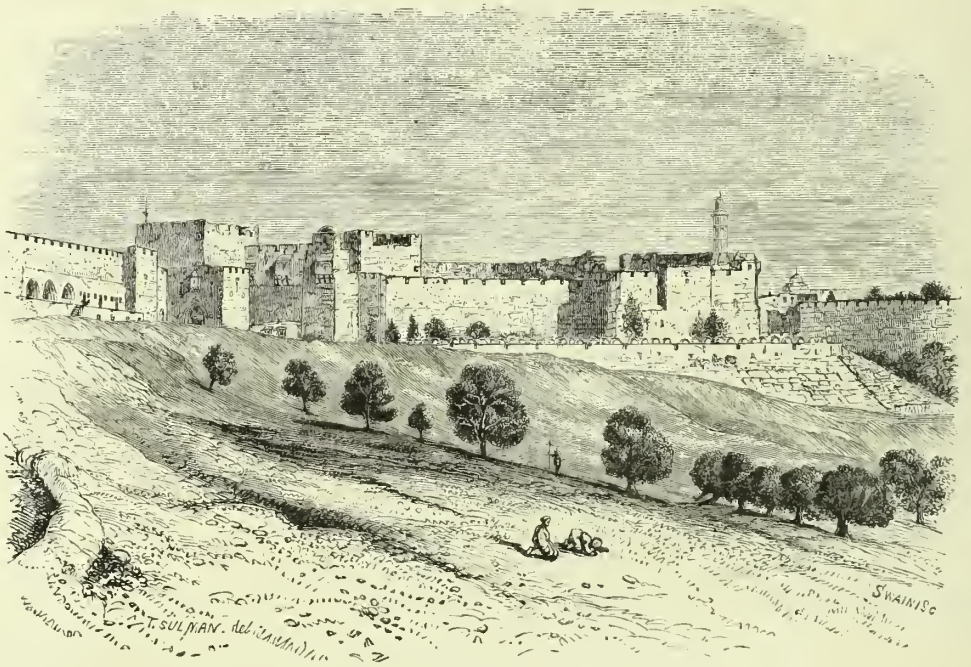
This relation of the Roman centurion astonished the apostle; but he was soon convinced that God had broken down the partition-wall, and no longer maintained a peculiar kindness for the sons of Jacob; that it was not the nation, but the religion —not the external quality of the man, but the internal temper of the mind

Another View of Jaffa.

—that recommended the human race to the favour of Omnipotence; that the devout and pious, the righteous and the good man, whatever part of the earth he may inhabit, is the favourite of Heaven; that God as highly respects a just and virtuous man in the barren wastes of Scythia as on the mountain of Sion; that the reconciling and making peace between God and man, by Jesus Christ, was the doctrine published by the prophets of old; and that God had now anointed and consecrated Jesus of Nazareth with Divine powers, in the exercise whereof he went about doing good to the children of men; that they had seen all he had done among the Jews, whom though they had slain and crucified, yet that God had raised him again the third day, and had openly showed him to his apostles and followers, whom he had chosen to be his peculiar witnesses, and whom he had accordingly permitted to eat and drink with him

after his resurrection, commanding them to preach the gospel to all mankind, and to testify that he was the person whom God had ordained to be the great Judge of the world; that all the prophets with one consent bore witness of him; and that this Jesus is he in whose name whosoever believes would certainly receive remission of sins.

While Peter was thus preaching to them the Holy Ghost fell upon the greatest part of his hearers, enabling them to speak several languages, and in them to magnify the great Creator of the universe. At this the Jews who accompanied Peter marvelled exceedingly to see that the gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured upon the Gentiles; and Peter, seeing this, told the company that he knew no reason why these persons should not be baptized, as they had received the Holy Ghost as well as they, and accordingly he gave orders that they should be baptized; and, to confirm them in the holy faith they had embraced, he stayed with them some time.



The Old Tower at the Jaffa Gate and the Citadel.

This action of St. Peter was considered in various lights by the brethren at Jerusalem, who, being but lately converted to the Christian faith, were zealously attached to the religious ceremonies of the Mosaic institution, and therefore most of them severely charged Peter, at his return, as being too familiar with the Gentiles. How powerful is the prejudice of education! The Jews had for many ages conceived an inveterate opposition against the Gentiles, considering them as persons hated by the Almighty, who had chosen them for his peculiar people. The law of Moses, indeed, enjoined them to be kind to their own nation in preference to all others; and the rites and institutions of their religion, and the

peculiar form of their commonwealth, rendered them very different from the inhabitants of other countries—a separation which in after ages they contracted into a much narrower compass. They were also tenaciously proud of their external privileges, in being the descendants of Abraham, the friend of God; and therefore looked upon the rest of the world as reprobates, proudly refusing to hold any conversation with them, or even to show them the common kindnesses of humanity.

It is, therefore, no wonder that they were highly displeased with St.

Bringing Lambs to the Temple Gates.

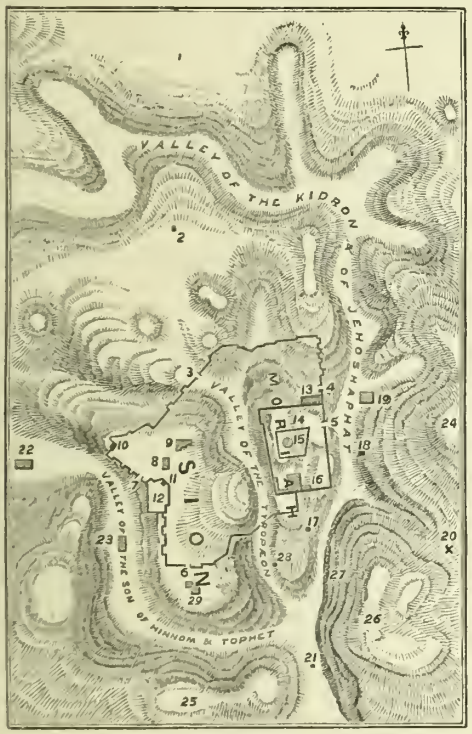
Peter; nor would he have been able to have defended his conduct in a satisfactory manner, had not he been charged with a peculiar commission from the Almighty for extending the privileges of the gospel to the Gentile world. But he had no sooner informed them that the grace of the gospel was not confined to any particular nation or people, nor to ranks or degrees among men, than they immediately changed their displeasure against him into thanks to the beneficent Father of the human

race, who had granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life eternal.

Peter, having thus finished his visitation to the newly-planted churches, returned to Jerusalem, and was indefatigable in instructing the converts in the religion of Jesus, and preaching the glad tidings of salvation to the descendants of Jacob. But he did not long continue in this pleasing course. Herod Agrippa, in order to ingratiate himself into the favour of the Jews, put the apostle James to death, and finding the action was highly acceptable to that stiff-necked people, he resolved to extend his cruelty to Peter, and accordingly cast him into prison; but the churches were incessant in their prayers to God for his safety, and what have mortals to fear when guarded by the hand of Omnipotence? Herod was persuaded he should soon accomplish his intention, and sacrifice Peter to the insatiable cruelty of the Jews. But, the night before this intended execution, a messenger from the courts of heaven visited the gloomy horrors of the dungeon, where he found Peter asleep between his keepers. The angel raised him up, took off his chains, and ordered him to gird on his garments and follow him. Peter obeyed, and, having passed through the first and second watch, they came to the iron gate leading to the city, which opened to them of its own accord. The angel also accompanied him through one of the streets, and then departed from him, on which Peter came to himself, and perceived that it was no vision, but that his great and beloved Master had really sent a messenger from above, and released him from prison. He therefore repaired to the house of Mary, where the church was assembled, offering up their prayers to the throne of grace for his safety. On his knocking at the door, a maid who came to let him in, knowing his voice, ran back to tell them that Peter was at the door, which they at first considered as the effect of fancy; but the damsel continuing to affirm that it was really true, they concluded it was his angel, or some messenger sent to him from the court of heaven. But, on opening the door, they were convinced of their mistake, finding that it was really Peter himself, who briefly told them how he was delivered, and, desiring them to inform his brethren of his being set at liberty, retired to another place. In the morning the officers came from Herod to the prison, with orders to bring Peter out to the people, who were gathered together to behold his execution. But, when they came to the prison, the keepers informed them that the apostle had made his escape, which so exasperated Herod, that he commanded those who were intrusted with the care of the prisoner to be put to death.

Some time after this miraculous deliverance of St. Peter, a controversy arose between the Jewish and the Gentile converts with regard to the observation of the Mosaic law, a dispute which gave great uneasiness

to many persons, the Jews zealously contending that it was absolutely necessary to salvation to be circumcised, and observe the precepts of the ceremonial law, as well as those of the gospel. To compose this difference, it was thought necessary to summon a general council of the apostles and brethren to meet at Jerusalem. This was accordingly done, and the case thoroughly debated. At last Peter stood up, and declared that God having chosen him out of all the apostles to be the first preacher of the gospel among the Gentiles, God, who was best able to judge of the hearts of men, had borne witness to them that they were accepted of him, by giving them his Holy Spirit, as well as he had done the Jews, and consequently that there was no difference between them. They could not, therefore, place the Jewish yoke, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, upon the necks of the disciples, without tempting and provoking the Almighty, who had given sufficient reasons to believe that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, would be saved by the grace of the gospel.



Site of Jerusalem.
(Scale, 1084 yards to the inch.)

1. Scopus.
2. Tombs of the Kings.
3. Damascus Gate.
4. St. Stephen's Gate.
5. Golden Gate.
6. David's Gate.
7. Jaffa Gate.
8. Pool of Hezekiah.
9. Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
10. Jalûd Ruin.
11. Castle of David.
12. Citadel.
13. Pool of Bethesda.
14. The Haram, or Holy Place, containing
15. The Dome of the Rock, and
16. The Mosques El-Aksah and Omar.
17. Fountain of the Virgin.
18. Pillar of Absalom.
19. Gethsemane.
20*. Shoulder of the Mount of Olives, where "he beheld the city, and wept over it."
21. En Rogel.
22. Upper Pool.
23. Lower Pool.
24. Summit of the Mount of Olives.
25. Hill of Evil Counsel.
26. Mount of Corruption.
27. Village of Siloam.
28. Pool of Siloam.
29. Sepulchre of David.

This declaration of St. Peter convinced the church, and it was unanimously decreed that no other burden than the temporary observance of a few particular precepts, equally convenient to the Jew and Gentile, should be imposed on them. And the decision was drawn up into a synodical epistle, and sent to the several churches for allaying the heats and controversies this dispute had occasioned.

Soon after this council Peter left Jerusalem, and went down to Antioch, where, using the liberty given him by the gospel, he freely ate and conversed with the Gentile proselytes, considering them now as "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." This he had been taught by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven; this had been lately decreed at Jerusalem; this he had before practised with regard to Cornelius and his family, and justi-

fied the action to the satisfaction of his accusers; and this he had freely and innocently done at Antioch, till some of the Jewish brethren coming thither, he, for fear of offending them, withdrew himself from the Gentiles, as if it had been unlawful for him to hold conversation with uncircumcised persons, notwithstanding he knew and was fully satisfied that cur blessed Saviour had broken down the wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile.

By thus acting against the light of his own mind and judgment, he condemned what he had approved, and destroyed the superstructure he had before erected; at the same time he confirmed the Jewish zealots in their inveterate errors, filled the minds of the Gentiles with scruples, and their consciences with fears. Nor was this all: the old prejudices between Jew and Gentile were revived, and the whole number of Jewish converts, following the apostle's example, separated themselves from the company of Gentile Christians. Nay, even Barnabas himself was carried away by this torrent of unwarrantable practice.

St. Paul was now at Antioch, and resolutely opposed St. Peter to his face; he publicly reproved him as a person worthy to be blamed for his gross prevarication. He reasoned and severely expostulated with him, that he who was himself a Jew, and consequently under a more immediate obligation of observing the Mosaic law, should throw off the yoke himself, and at the same time endeavour to impose it on the Gentiles, who were never under the necessity of observing the ceremonies of the Israelites—a severe, though an impartial charge. But the remarkable eagerness of St. Paul to place things on a proper foundation, though he succeeded for the present, made a great noise afterwards in the world, and gave occasion to the enemies of Christianity to represent the whole as a compact of forgery and deceit. Of such pernicious consequence are disputes among the princes of the church, and so fatal are the effects of pusillanimity, and a fear of offending persons bigoted to insignificant ceremonies.

We have already related all the transactions of this apostle that are founded on Scripture authority, and must now have recourse to ancient history for the residue of his life.

Some time before this contest at Antioch, St. Peter preached the gospel in various parts of the world, enlarging the kingdom of his great Master, and spreading the glad tidings of salvation among the inhabitants of various countries; and, among the rest, those of Rome, then the mistress of the world. In that capital he is said to have continued several years, till the Emperor Claudius, taking advantage of some seditious tumults raised by the Jews, published an edict, whereby they were banished from Rome, and, among the rest, St. Peter, who returned to Jerusalem, and was present at the synod

already mentioned. But how long he continued in the capital of Judea is uncertain, for we have no account of his transactions for many years. This, however, is certain—that he was not idle in the service of his great Master; and Eusebius tells us, from Metaphrastes, that he visited several of the western parts, and particularly this island of Great Britain, where he continued several years, spreading the glad tidings of salvation in these remote parts, and converting the several nations to the Christian faith.

But, however this be, whether St. Peter was or was not in England, it is certain that towards the latter end of Nero's reign he returned to Rome, where he found the minds of the people strangely bewitched and hardened against the doctrines of the gospel by the sorceries of Simon Magus, who, as I have already observed, was chastised by Peter for his wickedness at Samaria. This monster of impiety not only opposed the preaching of the apostles, but also did all in his power to render them and their doctrine odious to the emperor. St. Peter, foreseeing that the calumnies of Simon and his adherents would hasten his death, took the greater pains, and was still more assiduous to confirm those he had been anyways instrumental in converting in the sublime truths they had received; and, in order to this, strongly opposed the great deceiver of mankind, for, in the last year of his life, he seems to have written his two Epistles to the dispersed Jews in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia, and in an appointed encounter with Simon discovered his magical impostures, and, through the power and assistance of the Almighty, brought him to an exemplary and miserable death.

This happened in the following manner:—The apostle meeting with Simon at Rome, and finding him still pretending to be some great one, even the promised Messiah, he could not help opposing zealously his presumptuous arrogance. But Simon, more incensed by the opposition, offered to give the people such an evident demonstration of his being what he pretended, that he would place the whole beyond contradiction by immediately ascending up into heaven. Upon this, by the help of two pretended invisible devils, as in a chariot of fire, he raised himself from the earth, and seemed to be flying towards the regions of heaven. St. Peter and St. Paul, beholding the delusion, had recourse to prayer, and obtained their petitions of the Almighty, namely, that the impostor should be soon discovered, for the honour of the blessed Jesus. Accordingly, he fell headlong to the ground, by which he was so bruised, that he died in a very short time.

Such was the end of this miserable, this unhappy man; but the news of it no sooner reached the emperor's ears than he vowed revenge, both for the death of his favourite and the endeavours used by the apostles to turn mankind "from darkness to light,

and from the power of Satan unto God." Accordingly, he issued orders for apprehending St. Peter, together with his companion St. Paul. St. Ambrose tells us that, when the people perceived the danger to which St. Peter was now exposed, they prayed him to quit Rome, and repair for awhile to some secure retreat, that his life might be preserved for the benefit of the church. Peter with great reluctance yielded to their entreaties, and made his escape by night; but, as he passed the gate, he was met by a person in the form of his great and beloved Master, and, on his asking him whither he was going, answered, "To Rome, to be crucified a second time;" which Peter taking for a reproof of his cowardice, returned again into the city, was soon apprehended, and cast, together with St. Paul, into the Mamertine prison. Here they were confined eight or nine months, but spent their time in the exercise of religion, especially in preaching to the prisoners, and those who resorted to them; and during this confinement it is generally thought St. Peter wrote the Second Epistle to the dispersed Jews, wherein he endeavours to confirm them in the belief and practice of Christianity, and to fortify them against those poisonous and pernicious principles and actions which even then began to break in upon the Christian church.

Nero at last returned from Achaia, entered Rome in triumph, and, soon after his arrival, resolved that the apostles should fall as victims and sacrifices to his cruelty and revenge. While the fatal stroke was daily expected, the Christians in Rome were continually offering up their prayers to Heaven to protect those two holy persons. But the Almighty was now willing to put an end to their sorrows, and, after sealing the truth they had preached with their own blood, to receive them into the regions of eternal bliss and happiness, and exchange their crowns of martyrdom for crowns of glory. Accordingly, they were both condemned by the cruel emperor of Rome; and St. Peter, having taken his farewell of the brethren, especially of St. Paul, was taken from the prison, and led to the top of the Vatican Mount, near the Tiber, where he was sentenced to surrender up his life on the cross.

At his coming to the place of execution, he begged the favour of the officers that he might not be crucified in the common way, but with his head downward, affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture in which his Lord had suffered before him. This request was accordingly complied with, and the great apostle St. Peter surrendered up his soul into the hands of his great and beneficent Master, who came down from heaven to ransom mankind from destruction, and open for them the gates of the heavenly Canaan.

His body, being taken down from the cross, is said to have been embalmed by Marcellinus, the presbyter,

after the manner of the Jews, and then buried in the Vatican, near the Appian Way, two miles from Rome.

Here it remained till the time of Pope Cornelius, who reconveyed it to the Vatican, where it rested in an obscure place till the reign of Constantine, who, from the great reverence he entertained for the Christian religion, erected many churches at Rome, and rebuilt and vastly enlarged the Vatican in honour of St. Peter. He also greatly enriched the church with gifts and ornaments; and it has continued increasing in riches and splendour every age, till it is become one of the wonders of the world.

If we consider St. Peter as a man, there seems to have been a natural eagerness predominant in his temper, which animated his soul to the most bold, and sometimes rash, undertakings. It was this, in a great measure, that prompted him to be so very forward to speak, and to return answers sometimes before he had well considered them. It was this that made him expose his person to the most imminent dangers, promise those great things in behalf of his Master, resolutely draw his sword in his quarrel against a whole band of soldiers, and wound a servant of the high priest; nay, he had, in all probability, attempted greater things, had not his Lord restrained his impetuosity, and given a seasonable check to his fury.

If we consider him as a disciple of the blessed Jesus, we shall find him exemplary in the great duties of religion. His humility and lowliness of mind were remarkable. With what a passionate earnestness, on the conviction of a miracle, did he beg of our blessed Saviour to depart from him, thinking it unworthy the Son of God to come near so vile a sinner!

When the great Redeemer of mankind, by that amazing condescension, stooped so low as to wash the feet of his disciples, Peter could not be persuaded to admit his performing it, thinking it highly improper that so great a person should submit to such a servile office towards a person so mean as himself; nor could he be induced to admit of it till his great Master threatened to deprive him of his favour.

When Cornelius, the Roman centurion, heightened in his opinion of him by an immediate command from the Almighty concerning him, would have treated him with more than ordinary marks of esteem and veneration, he was so far from complying with it, that he declared he was nothing more than a mortal like himself. His love and zeal for his Master were remarkable; he thought he could never express either at too high a rate, venturing on the greatest perils, and exposing his life to the most imminent dangers. His forwardness to own his great Master for the Messiah and Son of the Most High was remarkably great; and it was this that drew from his Lord that honourable encomium, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." But his courage and constancy in confessing Christ,

even before his most inveterate enemies, were still greater after he had recovered himself from his fall. How plainly does he tell the Jews that they were the murderers and crucifiers of the Lord of glory! Nay, with what an undaunted courage, with what an heroic greatness of soul, did he tell the very Sanhedrim who had sentenced and condemned him that they were guilty of his death, and that they had no other way of escaping the vengeance of the Almighty but by the merits of that very Jesus whom they had crucified and put to death!

Lastly, if we consider him as an apostle, as pastor, or shepherd of the souls of men, we shall find him faithful and diligent in his office, zealously endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, reduce the erroneous, strengthen the weak, confirm the strong, reclaim the vicious, and turn the children of men into the paths of righteousness. He never omitted any opportunity of preaching to the people, and spreading the glad tidings of the gospel among the human race; and so powerful were his discourses, that he converted many thousands at one time. How many painful journeys and dangerous voyages did he undertake! With what unconquerable patience did he endure the greatest trials, surmount every difficulty, and remove every disposition, that he might plant the gospel of his beloved Master, never refusing even to lay down his life to promote it! Nor was he only assiduous to perform these duties himself; he was also careful to animate others to do the like, earnestly pressing and persuading the pastors and governors of the church to feed the flock of God, to labour freely for the good of the souls of men, and not undertake those offices to acquire advantages to themselves, beseeching them to treat the flock committed to their care with lenity and gentleness, and to be themselves shining examples of piety and religion, the surest method of rendering their ministry successful. And, because it was impossible for him to be always present to teach and warn the children of men, he endeavoured by letters to imprint on their minds the practice of what they had been taught—a method, he tells us, he was resolved to pursue as long as he continued an inhabitant of this world, thinking it meet, while he was in this tabernacle, to stir them up by putting them in mind of these things, that so they might be able, after his decease, to have them always in remembrance.

Thus lived, thus died, Simon Peter, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, and at length to offer up his life in ratification of the doctrines he had delivered, and the faith he had maintained and propagated.

The Feast of Tabernacles.

ST. PAUL.

CHAPTER I.

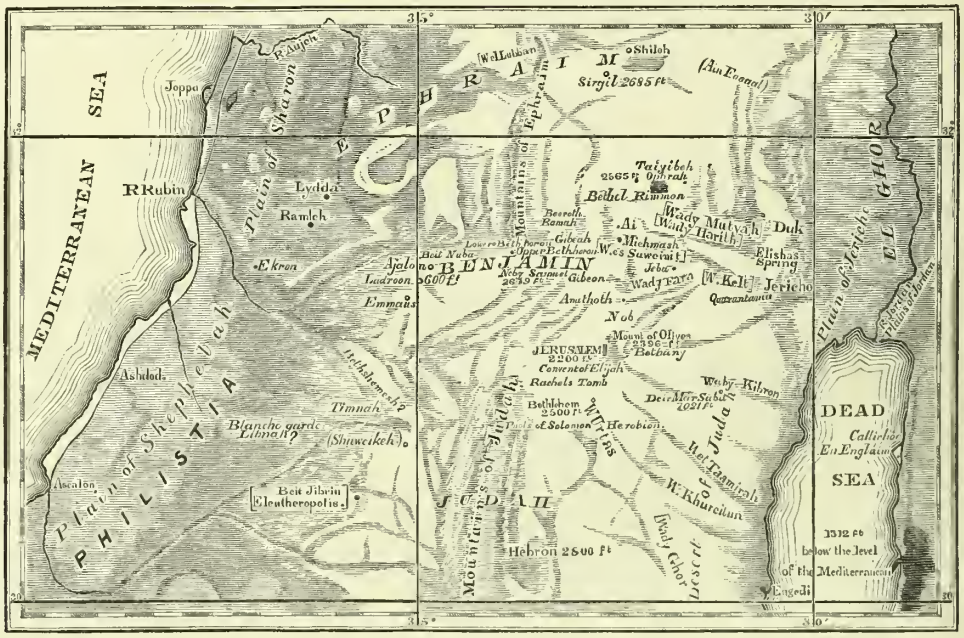
Account of this apostle from his birth till his conversion to the Christian faith.

The great apostle of the Gentiles was a native of Tarsus, and a descendant from the ancient stock of Abraham. He was born about two years before the blessed Jesus, and belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob, who thus prophesied of him: "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil"—a prophetical character which Tertullian and others will have to be accomplished in our apostle. For in his youth, or morning of his days, he persecuted the churches, destroying the flock of the Almighty: he devoured the prey. In his declining age, or evening of his days, he became a physician of the nations, feeding and distributing with the greatest care and assiduity the sheep of Christ, that great Shepherd of Israel: he divided the spoil.

Tarsus, the place of this apostle's nativity, was the metropolis of Cilicia, and situated about three hundred miles distant from Jerusalem. It was exceedingly rich and populous, and a Roman municipium, or free corporation, invested with the privileges of Rome by the first two emperors, as a reward for the citizens' firm adherence to the Cæsars in the rebellion of Crassus. St. Paul was, therefore, born a Roman citizen, and

he often pleads this privilege on his trials.

It was common for the inhabitants of Tarsus to send their children into other cities for learning and improvement, especially to Jerusalem, where they were so numerous that they had a synagogue of their own, called the synagogue of the Cilicians. To this capital our apostle was also sent, and brought up at the feet of that eminent rabbi, Gamaliel, in the most exact knowledge of the law of Moses. Nor did he fail to profit by the instructions of that great master, for he so diligently conformed himself to its precepts that, without boasting, he asserts of himself that touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless, and defied even his enemies to allege anything to the contrary, even in his youth. He joined himself to the sect of the Pharisees, the most strict order of the Jewish religion,



South of Palestine.

but, at the same time, the proudest, and the greatest enemies to Christ and his holy religion.

With regard to his double capacity of Jewish extraction and Roman freedom he had two names, Saul and Paul, the former Hebrew, and the latter Latin. It was common for the descendants of Benjamin to give the name Saul to their children ever since the time of the first king of Israel, who was chosen out of that tribe; and Paul was a name as common among the Romans. We must also consider his trade of tent-making as a part of his education, it being the constant practice of the Jews to bring up their children to some honest calling, that in case of necessity they might provide for themselves by the labour of their own hands.

Saul, having obtained a thorough knowledge of the sciences cultivated

by the Jews, and being naturally of a very hot and fiery temper, became a great champion of the law of Moses and the traditions of the elders, which he considered as zeal for God. This rendered him impatient of all opposition to the doctrine and tenets he had imbibed, and a vehement blasphemer and persecutor of the Christians, who were commonly reputed the enemies and destroyers of the Jewish economy. We must not, however, consider our apostle as guilty of the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; for he declares that he had ever been careful to act in conformity to the dictates of his conscience, by which he thought himself bound to do "many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." It was, therefore, the prejudices of his education and the natural warmth of his temper that excited him to those violent persecutions of the Christians for which he became so famous.

The first action we find him engaged in was the disputation he and his countrymen had with the martyr Stephen with regard to the Messiah. The Christian was too hard for them in the dispute, but they were too powerful for him in their civil interests; for, being enraged at his convincing arguments, they carried him before the high priest, who by false accusations condemned him to death. How far Saul was concerned in this cruel action it is impossible to say: all we know is, that he kept the raiment of them that slew him.

The storm of persecution against the church being thus begun, it increased prodigiously, and the poor Christians of Jerusalem were miserably harassed and dispersed. In this persecution our apostle was a principal agent, searching all the adjacent parts for the afflicted saints, beating some in the synagogue, compelling some to blaspheme, confining some in prison, and procuring others to be put to death.

Nor could Jerusalem and the adjacent parts confine his fiery zeal; he applied to the Sanhedrim, and procured a commission from that court to extend his persecution to Damascus. How infernally insatiable is the fury of a misguided zeal! how restless and unwearied in its designs of cruelty! It had already sufficiently harassed the poor Christians at Jerusalem; but, not content with this, it persecuted them even to strange cities, even to Damascus itself, whither many of them had fled for shelter, resolving to bring them back to Jerusalem, in order to their punishment and execution.

It may not be improper here to observe that the Jewish Sanhedrim had not only the power of seizing and scourging offenders against their law within the bounds of their own country, but, by the connivance and favour of the Romans, might send into other countries, where there were any synagogues that acknowledged a dependence in religious affairs upon the council of Jerusalem, to apprehend them; and accordingly Saul was sent to Damascus, to appre-

hend what Christians he could find in that city, and bring them bound to Jerusalem.

But the Almighty designed to employ him in a work of a very different nature, and accordingly stopped him in his journey; for, as he was travelling between Jerusalem and Damascus to execute the commission of the Jewish Sanhedrim, a refulgent light, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, darted upon him, at which both he and his companions were terribly amazed and confounded, falling, together with their horses, prostrate on the ground. Amidst this confusion a voice was heard in the Hebrew language, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" to which Saul replied, "Who art thou, Lord?" and was immediately answered, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." As if the blessed Jesus had said, All thy attempts to extirpate the faith in me will prove abortive, and, like kicking against the spikes, wound and torment thyself.

Saul was sufficiently convinced of his folly in acting against Jesus, whom he was now assured to be the true Messiah, and asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" on which the blessed Jesus informed him of the true intention of his appearance. "Rise," said he, "and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." And, for further instruction, the immaculate Jesus referred him to one of his followers, named Ananias, commanding him to repair immediately to the city.

The company which were with him heard the voice, but did not see the person who spake from heaven. In all probability they were ignorant of the Hebrew language, and therefore only heard a confused sound; for the apostle himself tells us that "they heard not the voice of him that spake;" that is, they did not understand what was spoken.

The apostle now arose from the earth, but found himself deprived of sight, the resplendent brightness of the vision being too intense for mortal eyes to behold. His companions, therefore, led him by the hand to the city of Damascus, where he entered the house of Judas, and remained there three days without sight, nor did he either eat or drink, but spent his time in prayer to the Almighty, beseeching him to pardon the sins of his ignorance and blind zeal.

In the meantime our blessed Saviour appeared in a vision to Ananias, a very devout and religious

man, highly esteemed by all the inhabitants of Damascus, though he professed the religion of the crucified Jesus, commanding him to go into such a street in the city, and inquire in the house of Judas for one Saul of Tarsus, then offering up the most fervent prayers to the throne of grace.

Ananias, who was ever ready to obey the commands of the Most High, was startled at the name, having heard of his bloody practices at Jerusalem, and what commission he was now come to execute in Damascus.

Damascus Gate.

He therefore suspected that his pretended conversion was nothing more than a snare artfully laid for the Christians. But our blessed Saviour soon removed his apprehensions by telling him that his suspicions were entirely destitute of foundation, and that he had now taken him as a chosen vessel to preach the gospel both to the Jews and Gentiles, and even before the greatest monarchs of the earth, acquainting him at the same time with the great things he should do and suffer for the sake of the gospel, what chains and imprisonments, what racks and scourges, what hunger and thirst, what shipwrecks, and at last even death itself, he should undergo.

This quieted the fears of Ananias, who immediately obeyed the heavenly vision, repaired to the house of Judas, and laid hands upon Saul, saying, That Jesus who appeared to thee in the way hath sent me to restore thy sight, and, by the infusion of his Spirit, to give thee the knowledge of those truths which thou hast blindly and ignorantly persecuted, but who now is willing to receive thee by baptism into his church, and make thee a member of his body. This speech was no sooner pronounced than there fell from his eyes thick films resembling scales, and he received his sight, and after baptism conversed freely with the Christians of Damascus. Nor did he only converse with them; he also, to the great astonishment of the whole church, preached the gospel to those Christians he came down with an intention to destroy, boldly asserting that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and proving it to the Jews with such demonstrative evidence that they were confounded, and found it impossible to answer him.

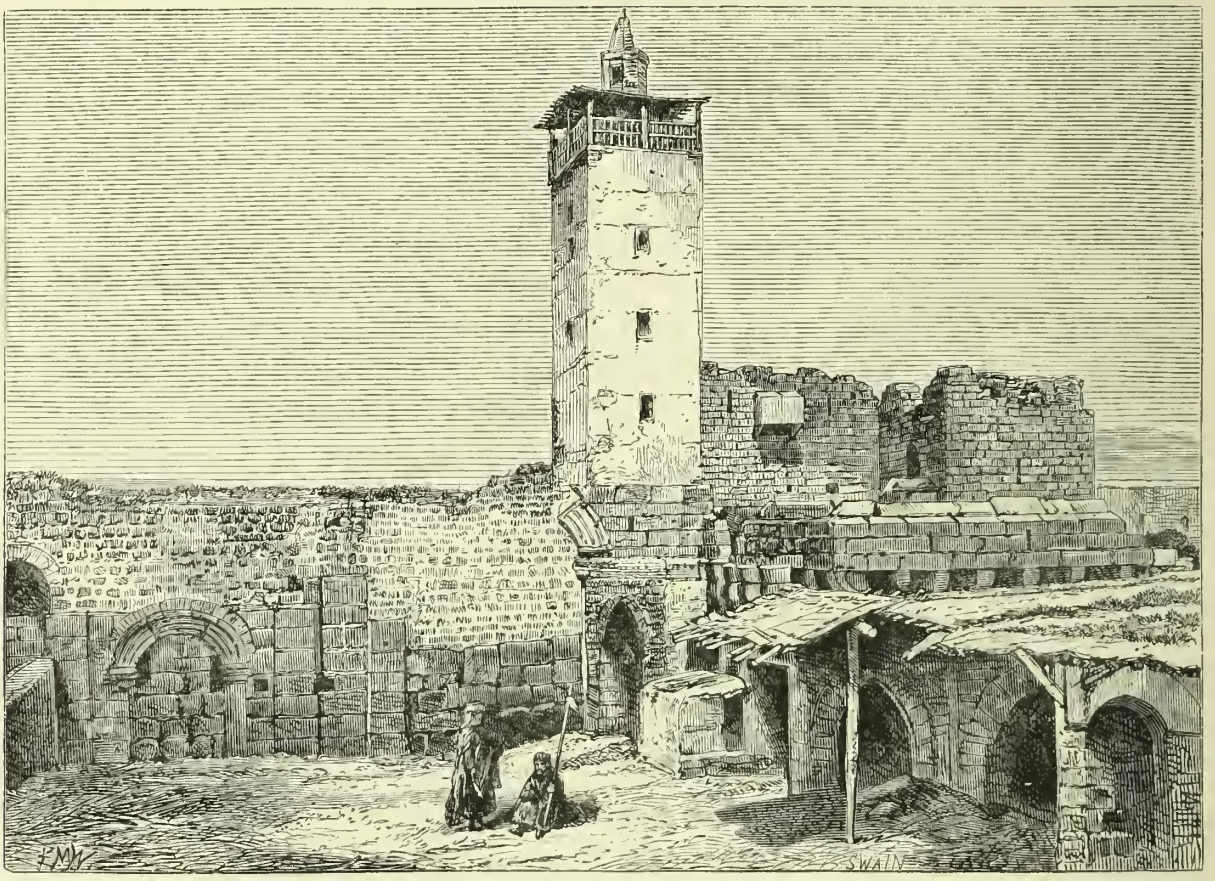
CHAPTER II.

Continuation of the life of St. Paul from the time of his conversion till the council was held at Jerusalem.

THE miraculous convert, at the instance of the Divine command, retired into Arabia Petræa, where he received a full revelation of all the mysteries of Christianity; for he

himself declares that he conversed not with flesh and blood. Having preached in several parts of that country some time, he returned again to Damascus, applying himself with the utmost assiduity to the great work of the ministry, frequenting the synagogues there, powerfully confuting the objections commonly made by the descendants of Jacob against Jesus of Nazareth, and converting great numbers of Jews and Gentiles.

He was, indeed, remarkably zealous in his preaching, and blessed with a very extraordinary method of reasoning, whereby he proved the fundamental points of Christianity



East Gate of Damascus.

beyond exception. This irritated the Jews to the highest degree; and at length, after two or three years' continuance in those parts, they found means to prevail on the governor of Damascus to have him put to death. But they knew it would be difficult to take him, as he had so many friends in the city; they therefore kept themselves in a continual watch, searched all the houses where they supposed he might conceal himself, and also obtained a guard from the governor to observe the gates, in order to prevent his escaping from them.

In this distress his Christian friends were far from deserting him:

they tried every method that offered to procure his escape; but, finding it impossible for him to pass through either of the gates of the city, they let him down from one of their houses, through a window, in a basket over the wall, by which means the cruel designs of his enemies were rendered abortive.

Having thus escaped from his malicious persecutors, he repaired to Jerusalem, and, on his arrival, addressed himself to the church. But they, knowing well the former temper and principles of this great persecutor, shunned his company, till Barnabas brought him to Peter, who was not yet cast into prison, and to James, the Lord's brother, bishop of Jerusalem, informing them of his miraculous conversion, and that he had preached the gospel with the greatest boldness in the synagogue of Damascus; upon which they gladly received him, and familiarly entertained him fifteen days.

During this interval he was remarkably assiduous in preaching the gospel of the Son of God, and confuting the Hellenist Jews with the greatest courage and resolution. But snares were soon laid for him, as malice can as easily cease to be as to remain inactive; and being warned by God in a vision that his testimony would not be received at Jerusalem, that therefore it was necessary for him to depart and preach the gospel to the Gentiles, he accordingly, being conducted by the brethren to Cæsarea Philippi, set sail for Tarsus, his native city, from whence he was soon after brought by Barnabas to Antioch, to assist him in propagating Christianity in that city.

In this employment he spent one whole year, and had the pleasure of seeing the gospel flourish in a very remarkable manner. In this city it was that the disciples first acquired the name of Christians, for before they were styled Nazarenes; but this appellation soon prevailed all over the world, and the former was, in a few ages, almost entirely forgotten.

About this time a terrible famine, foretold by Agabus, happened in several parts of the Roman empire, particularly Judea, which induced the Christians at Antioch to compassionate the miseries of their brethren at Jerusalem; and accordingly they raised considerable contributions for their relief, which they sent to the capital of Judea by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, who, immediately after executing their commission, returned to Antioch. But, while they were performing the public exercises of religion, it was revealed to them by the Holy Ghost that they should set apart Barnabas and Saul to preach the gospel in other places; and accordingly they were immediately deputed for that service by prayer, fasting, and the imposition of hands.

The first place they visited was Seleucia, where they did not continue long, sailing for Cyprus. At Salamis, a great city in that island, they preached in the synagogue of the Jews. From hence they removed

to Paphos, the residence of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of the island, a man of great wisdom and prudence, but miserably seduced by the wicked artifices of Bar-jesus, a Jewish impostor, who styled himself Elymas, or the magician, vehemently opposed the apostles, and kept the proconsul from embracing the faith.

The proconsul, however, called for the apostles, who, after severely checking Elymas for his malicious opposition to the truth, told him the Divine vengeance was now ready to seize upon him; and immediately he was deprived of his sight, the vengeance of the Almighty observing in this punishment a remarkable proportion, in depriving him of his bodily eyes who had so wilfully and maliciously shut those of his mind against the light of the gospel, and also endeavoured to keep others in darkness and ignorance. This miracle convinced the proconsul of the truth of the doctrines taught by the apostles, and made him a convert to the faith.

St. Paul, after this remarkable success in Cyprus, repaired to Phrygia in Pamphylia, and, taking Titus with him in the room of Mark, who was gone to Jerusalem, travelled to Antioch, the metropolis of Pisidia.

Soon after their arrival they entered the synagogue of the Jews on the Sabbath day, and after the reading of the law, Paul, being invited by the rulers of the synagogue, delivered himself in the following manner:—

Hearken, all ye descendants of Jacob, and ye that fear the Almighty, to the words of my mouth. The God of Israel made choice of our fathers, and loved them, when they had no city of their own to dwell in, but were strangers and slaves in Egypt, bringing them from thence with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm; fed them in the wilderness forty years; and would not suffer his anger to arise against them, though they often provoked him in the desert. On their arrival in the land he promised their fathers, he destroyed the nations that inhabited it, and placed them in that fruitful country, dividing it to them by lot. When they were settled in the land, he gave them judges during four hundred and fifty years, till Samuel the prophet. But, on their desiring a king, he placed over them Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who reigned about forty years. After his death he placed David on the throne of Israel, giving him this testimony, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." And, according to his promise, the Almighty hath raised up to the sons of David a Saviour Jesus, which is Christ the Lord, the baptism of repentance having been preached before his coming by John. And, as his forerunner executed his office, he asked his followers, "Whom think ye that I am?" You must not mistake me for the Messiah; he will soon follow me; but I am not worthy to perform the meanest office for him. To you, therefore, ye descendants of

Abraham, and all others who fear the Almighty, is this word of salvation sent; for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the rulers of Israel, being ignorant of him and the voices of the prophets, though read every Sabbath in their synagogues, fulfilled their predictions by condemning the

King Saul and David.

immaculate Son of the Most High. They found, indeed, no fault in him, though they earnestly desired Pilate that he might be slain. When everything that had been written by the prophets concerning him was fulfilled, they took him from the tree, and deposited his body in the chambers of

the grave. But death had no power to detain him; his Almighty Father raised him from the habitations of the dead; after which he was seen during many days by his disciples, who attended him from Galilee, and are the witnesses chosen by Omnipotence of these great and miraculous works. And we now declare unto you glad tidings, namely, that the promise made by the Almighty to our forefathers he hath performed to us, their children, by raising Jesus from the dead. The prophet David also said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." He also foretold that he should return from the chambers of the dust, and no more be subject to corruption. "I will give him," said he, "the sure mercies of David." And again, "Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Now, this prophecy must relate to the Messiah, for David himself, after he had swayed the sceptre of Israel a certain

Fountain of Abraham.

time, fell asleep, was deposited in the chambers of the grave, and his flesh saw corruption; but the great Son of David, whom the Almighty raised from the dead, never saw corruption. Be it, therefore, known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Saviour is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. It is by his merits we are justified from all things, which was impossible by the law of Moses. Be careful, therefore, lest what was foretold by the prophets come upon you: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

This spirited address of the great apostle carried with it its own weight, and obtained from the converted Jews a request that it should again be delivered the ensuing Sabbath, when almost the whole city flocked to hear the apostles; at which the Jews were filled with envy, and contradicted

Paul, uttering many blasphemous expressions against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But their opposition could not daunt the apostles, who boldly declared that our blessed Saviour had charged them to preach the gospel first to the Jews, but, as they so obstinately rejected it, they were now to address themselves to the Gentiles, who, hearing this, rejoiced exceedingly, magnifying the words of the Almighty, and many of them embraced the doctrines of the gospel.

This increased the malice and fury of the Jews, who by false and artful insinuations prevailed on some of the more bigoted and honourable women to bring over their husbands to their party, by which means Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city, at which the apostles departed, shaking off the dust of their feet as a testimony against their ingratitude and infidelity.

From Antioch they went to Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, a province of the Lesser Asia, where they again entered into the synagogue of the Jews, notwithstanding the ill-treatment they had met with from them in other places; for so great was their zeal for the gospel that they were not to be deterred from preaching it by ill-usage, however great. Therefore, according to their usual method, they again began their preaching in the assembly of Israelites, and the Almighty so far assisted their endeavours that many, both Jews and proselytes, believed. Their success encouraged them to continue a considerable time in this city to instruct the converts and confirm their faith by miracles. But though they had gained a considerable part of the city to the faith, yet many continued in their infidelity; the old leaven of Jewish malice began again to ferment, and the unbelieving Jews, having stirred up the Gentiles against the apostles, at last prevailed on the multitude to stone them. But the apostles, having timely notice of their design, fled from the city, and travelled to Lystra, where they preached the gospel to the inhabitants, and those who dwelt in the adjacent country.

Among the converts at Lystra was a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, and never had walked. But Paul, perceiving that he had faith to be saved, thought proper to add the cure of his body to that of his soul, knowing that it would not only be beneficial to him, but to all the rest of the believers, by confirming their faith; and that the miracle might be wrought in the most conspicuous manner, he, in the midst of the congregation, said, in an audible voice to the man, "Stand upright on thy feet;" and the words were no sooner pronounced than his strength was at once restored, and he leaped up and walked.

The people who beheld this miracle well knew that it was not wrought by any human power; but, having been initiated into the superstitious customs of the heathen, cried

out, in the speech of Lycaonia, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." And accordingly they called Barnabas Jupiter, because of his venerable gravity, and Paul Mercurius, from his eloquence. Nor was it long before the whole city resounded with acclamations; so that almost all the inhabitants gathered themselves together, and, preceded by the priest of Jupiter and oxen dressed in garlands, they came to the house where the apostles were, intending to do sacrifice to them. But, as soon as Barnabas and Paul understood their intentions, they were greatly affected at this superstitious attempt, and, rending their clothes to express their grief and abhorrence of the action, ran to them, crying out, Ye men of Lystra, ye are mistaken in the object of your worship; for though we have done many miracles in the name and by the power of Christ, yet we are no more than men, and subject to the same passions with yourselves, and preach unto you the glad tidings of salvation, that ye may forsake the vanities of this world, and turn to the living God, who created the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all the creatures they contain. This Omnipotent Being suffered all nations formerly to walk in their own ways, though he never left himself without a witness, doing the greatest good to the children of men; it is he that sendeth rain from heaven, and crowneth the year with fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness.

This argument of the apostle's had the desired effect; and the people were at last, though with difficulty, persuaded to lay aside their intended idolatrous sacrifice. And surely no argument could be more proper to affect the minds of his audience. Is it possible to survey the several parts of the creation, and not discover in every place evident traces of an infinite wisdom, power, and goodness? Who can survey universal nature, and not at once see and admire its great Author, who has disposed of all created things with such order and regularity as to subserve the wise designs of his providence, and display his own power and glory? Behold the sun, how justly is that source of light and heat placed in the centre of the planetary choir, that each may enjoy its destined share of his prolific beams, so that the earth is not burnt by a too near approach, nor chilled by the northern blasts from too great a recess, but impregnated with fruits and flowers by the happy influence of a vital heat, and crowned with luxuriant plenty by the benign influences of the season! It is that Omnipotent Being who poises "the balancings of the clouds," that divides "a watercourse for the overflowing of waters," and "a way for the lightning of thunder." Who can bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?" Or who can "bring forth Mazzaroth in his season," or "guide Arcturus with his sons?" Do these happen by chance, or by the secret appointment of Infinite

Wisdom? Who can contemplate the wonderful properties of the air, the great treasury of vital breath, and not reflect on the Divine Wisdom that formed it? If we survey the earth, we there discover the footsteps of an Almighty Being, who "stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing," filling it with a great variety of admirable and useful creatures, and maintaining them all by the bounty of his hand. It is he that clothes the grass with a delightful verdure, that crowns the year with his loving kindness, and causes the valleys to stand thick with corn. It is he that maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herbs for the service of man. He adorns the lilies of the field, that neither toil nor spin, with a glory that excels the pomp and grandeur of Solomon's court. "He shut up the sea with doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." It is the Almighty Being that arrests the storm, and smooths the tempestuous billows of the deep; that delivereth the mariner from all his troubles, and bringeth his ship into the desired haven of safety. How reasonable, therefore, is it that we should worship and adore this omnipotent, this kind Creator, and not transfer the honours due to him alone to frail mortals, much less to dumb idols, the work of men's hands!

The apostles indefatigably persevered in the execution of their important commission, declaring wherever they went the glad tidings of salvation through repentance unto life, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the malice of the Jews still pursued them, for some of these bigoted Israelites, coming from Antioch and Iconium, exasperated and stirred up the multitude, so that those very persons who could hardly be restrained from offering sacrifice to them now used them like slaves, stoning them in so cruel a manner that Paul was thought to be dead, and as such they dragged him out of the city; but while the Christians of Lystra were attending on his corpse, probably in order to carry him to the grave, he arose and returned with them into the city, and the next day departed with Barnabas to Derbe, where they preached the gospel and converted many, no danger being able to terrify them from the work of the ministry, and publishing the glad tidings of salvation in every place.

They did not, however, long continue at Derbe, but returned to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Pisidia, confirming the Christians of those places in the faith, earnestly persuading them to persevere, and not be discouraged with those troubles and persecutions which they must expect would attend the profession of the gospel. And that the affairs of the church might be conducted with more regularity, they ordained elders and pastors to teach, to instruct, and to watch over them, and then left

them to the protection of the Almighty, to whose care they recommended them by prayer and fasting.

After leaving Antioch they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia; and, after preaching the gospel at Perga, they went down to Attalia. Having thus finished the circuit of their ministry, they returned back to Antioch in Syria, from whence they at first departed. Here they summoned the church, and gave them an account of their ministry, the success it had met with in these different parts, and how great a door had thus been opened for the conversion of the Gentile world.

While St. Paul continued at Antioch, that famous controversy with regard to the observation of the Jewish ceremonies in the Christian dispensation was set on foot by certain Jewish converts, to the great disturbance of the whole church. And it was determined to send Paul and Barnabas to consult with the apostles and church at Jerusalem, that this affair might be settled on the most solid foundation. On their arrival at Jerusalem, they first addressed themselves to Peter, James, and John, the pillars of that church, by whom they were kindly entertained, and admitted to the right hand of fellowship. And perceiving, by the account given them by St. Paul, that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, as that of the circumcision was to Peter, they agreed that Peter should preach to the Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. This being determined, a council was summoned, wherein Peter declared his opinion, and Paul and Barnabas acquainted them with the great things God, by their ministry, had done among the Gentiles—a plain evidence that they were accepted by the Almighty, though uncircumcised, as well as the Jews, with all their legal rights and privileges. Accordingly, it was unanimously determined that the Gentiles were not under the obligation of the law of Moses, and therefore that some persons of their own church should be joined with Paul and Barnabas to carry the decrees of the council to Antioch, for their fuller satisfaction in this matter. Nothing tends more to impede the progress of vital religion than a bigoted attachment to unessential forms and modes.

CHAPTER III.

Transactions of this great apostle from the time of the synod at Jerusalem till his departure from Athens.

THE controversy concerning the observation of Jewish ceremonies in the Christian church being decided in favour of the latter, St. Paul and his companions returned back to Antioch, and soon after Peter himself came down. On reading the decretal epistle in the church, the converts conversed freely and inoffensively with the Gentiles, till some of the Jews coming thither from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew his conversation, as if it had been a thing unwarrantable and unlawful. By such a strange method of proceeding the minds of

many were dissatisfied, and their consciences very uneasy. St. Paul, with the greatest concern, observed it, and publicly rebuked Peter with that sharpness and severity his unwarrantable practice deserved.

Soon after this dispute Paul and Barnabas resolved to visit the churches they had planted among the Gentiles, and Barnabas was desirous of taking with them his cousin Mark; but this Paul strenuously opposed, as he had left them in their former journey. This trifling dispute arose to such a height that these two great apostles and fellow-labourers in the gospel parted. Barnabas, taking Mark with him, repaired to Cyprus, his native country; and Paul, having made choice of Silas, and recommended the success of his undertaking to the care of Divine Providence, set forward on his intended journey.

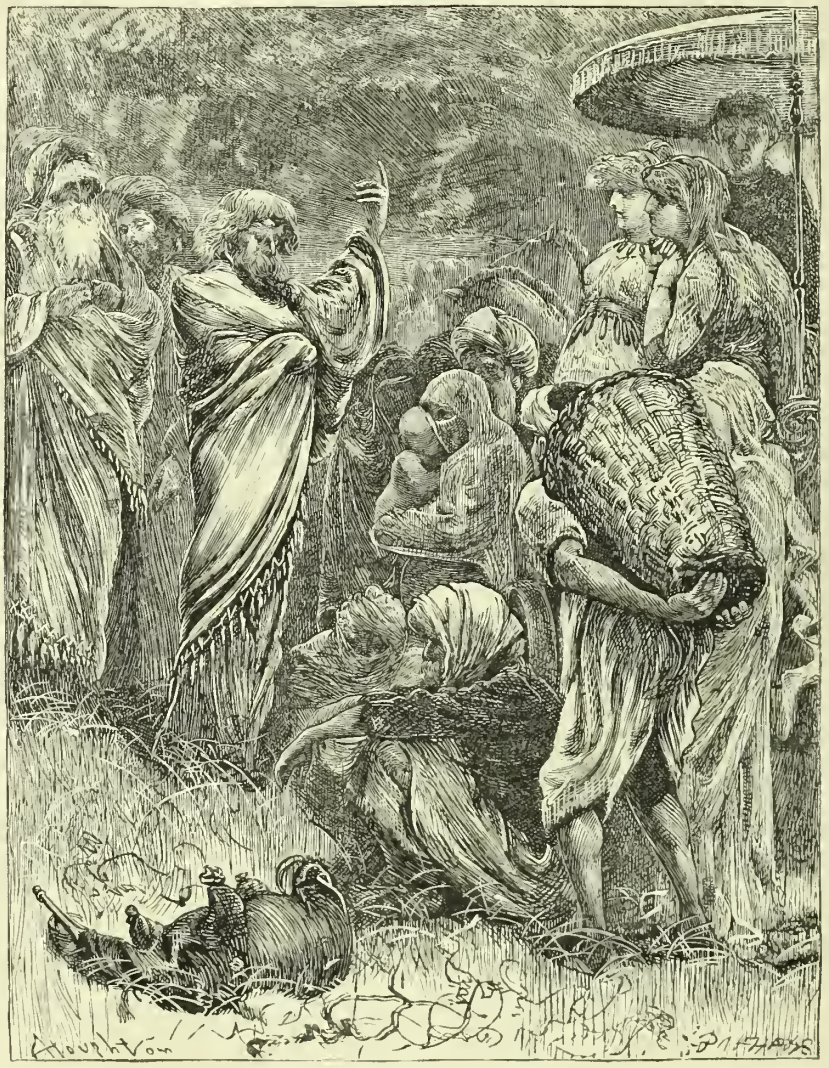
They first visited the churches of Syria and Cilicia, confirming them in the faith by their instructions and exhortations. Hence they sailed to Crete, where Paul preached the gospel, and constituted Titus to be the first bishop and pastor of the island, leaving him to settle those affairs of the church which time would not permit the apostle to settle himself. From hence Paul and Silas returned back into Cilicia, and came to Lystra, where they found Timothy, whose father was a Greek, but his mother a Jewish convert, and by her he had been brought up under all the advantages of a pious and religious education, especially with regard to the Holy Scriptures, which he had studied with the greatest assiduity and success. This person St. Paul designed for the companion of his travels, and a special instrument in the ministry of the gospel. But, knowing that his being uncircumcised would prove a stumbling-block to the Jews, he caused him to be circumcised, being willing, in lawful and indifferent matters, to conform himself to the tempers and apprehensions of men, in order to save their souls. In this instance the apostle evinced much prudence, well knowing that inveterate prejudices in religious matters are not easily overcome; for which reason he is said to become all things to all men.

Everything being ready for their journey, St. Paul and his companions departed from Lystra, passing through Phrygia and the country of Galatia, where the apostle was entertained with the greatest kindness and veneration, the people looking upon him as an angel sent immediately from heaven; and being by revelation forbidden to go into Asia, he was commanded by a second vision to repair to Macedonia to preach the gospel. Accordingly, our apostle prepared to pass from Asia into Europe.

Here St. Luke joined them, and became ever after the inseparable companion of St. Paul, who, being desirous of finding the speediest passage into Macedonia, took ship with his companions, Silas, Luke, and Timothy, and came to Samo-

thracia, an island in the Ægean Sea, not far from Thrace, and the next day to Neapolis, a part of Macedonia. Leaving Neapolis, they repaired to Philippi, the metropolis of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony, where they stayed some days.

In this city, Paul, according to his constant practice, preached in a proseucha, or oratory of the Jews, which stood by the river's side, at some distance from the city, and was much frequented by the devout women of their religion, who met



St. Paul preaching to Women.

there to pray and hear the law. To these St. Paul preached the glad tidings of the gospel, and, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, converted many, especially a certain woman named Lydia, a Jewish proselyte, a seller of purple in that city, but a native of Thyatira. This woman, being baptized with her whole family, was so importunate with St. Paul and his companions to abide at her house, that they were constrained to accept of her entertainment.

During the time of the apostles' residing in this city they continued their daily course of worshipping at the same oratory; and after several days, as they were repairing to the same place of devotion, there met them a damsel who had a prophetic spirit of divination, by whom her masters acquired very great advantage. This woman followed Paul and his companions, crying out, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Paul at first took no notice of her, not being willing to multiply miracles without necessity; but, when he saw her following them several days together, he began to be troubled, and in imitation of his great Master, who would not suffer the devil to acknowledge him, lest his false and lying tongue should prejudice the truth in the minds of men, commanded the spirit, in the name of Jesus, to come out of her. The evil spirit with reluctance obeyed, and left the damsel that very instant.

This miraculous cure proving a great loss to her masters, who acquired large gains from her soothsaying, they were filled with malice and envy against the apostles, and, by their instigation, the multitude arose, and seizing upon Paul and his companions, hurried them before the magistrates and governors of the colony, accusing them of introducing many innovations which were prejudicial to the state, and unlawful for them to comply with, as being Romans.

The magistrates, being concerned for the tranquillity of the state, and jealous of all disturbances, were very forward to punish the offenders, against whom the whole multitude testified, and therefore commanded the officers to strip them, and scourge them severely as seditious persons.

This was accordingly executed, after which the apostles were committed to close custody, the gaoler receiving more than ordinary charge to keep them safely; and he accordingly thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. But the most obscure dungeon, or the pitchy mantle of the night, cannot intercept the beams of Divine joy and comfort from the souls of pious men. Their minds were all serenity; and at midnight they prayed and sung praises so loud, that they were heard in every part of the prison. Nor were their prayers offered to the throne of grace in vain: an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors, loosed the chains, and set the prisoners at liberty. This convulsion of nature roused the gaoler from his sleep, who, concluding from what he saw that all his prisoners were escaped, was going to put a period to his life, but Paul, observing him, hastily cried out, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." The keeper was now as greatly surprised at the goodness of the apostles as he was before terrified at the thought of their escape; and, calling for a light, he came immediately into the presence of the apostles, fell down at

their feet, took them from the dungeon, brought them to his own house, washed their stripes, and begged of them to instruct him in the knowledge of that God who was so mighty to save.

St. Paul readily granted his request, and replied that, if he believed in Jesus Christ, he might be saved, with his whole house. Accordingly, the gaoler, with all his family, were, after competent instruction, baptized, and received as members of the church of Christ. How happy a change does the doctrine of the gospel make in the minds of men! How does it smooth the roughest tempers, and instil the sweetest principles of civility and good-nature into the minds of men! He who, but a few moments before, tyrannized over the apostles with the most cruel usage, now treats them with the greatest respect and the highest marks of kindness.

As soon as it was day, the magistrates, either hearing what had happened, or reflecting on what they had done as too harsh and unjustifiable, sent their sergeant to the gaoler, with orders to discharge the apostles. The gaoler joyfully delivered the message, and bid them "depart in peace;" but Paul, that he might make the magistrates sensible what injury they had done them, and how unjustly they had punished them without examination or trial, sent them word that, as they thought proper to scourge and imprison Romans, contrary to the laws of the empire, he expected they should come themselves, and make them some satisfaction.

The magistrates were terrified at this message, well knowing how dangerous it was to provoke the formidable power of the Romans, who never suffered any freeman to be beaten uncondemned. They came, therefore, to the prison, and very submissively entreated the apostles to depart without any further disturbance.

This small recompense for the cruel usage they had received was accepted by the meek followers of the blessed Jesus: they left the prison, and retired to the house of Lydia, where they comforted their brethren with an account of their deliverance, and departed, having laid the foundation of a very eminent church, as appears from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians.

Leaving Philippi, Paul and his companions continued their journey towards the west, till they came to Thessalonica, the metropolis of Macedonia, about a hundred and twenty miles from Philippi. On their arrival at Thessalonica, Paul, according to his custom, went into the synagogue of the Jews, and preached unto his countrymen, the ungrateful usage he had met with in other places not discouraging him from persevering in so glorious a work. His doctrine, however, was strenuously opposed by the Jews, who would not allow Jesus to be the Messiah, because of his ignominious death.

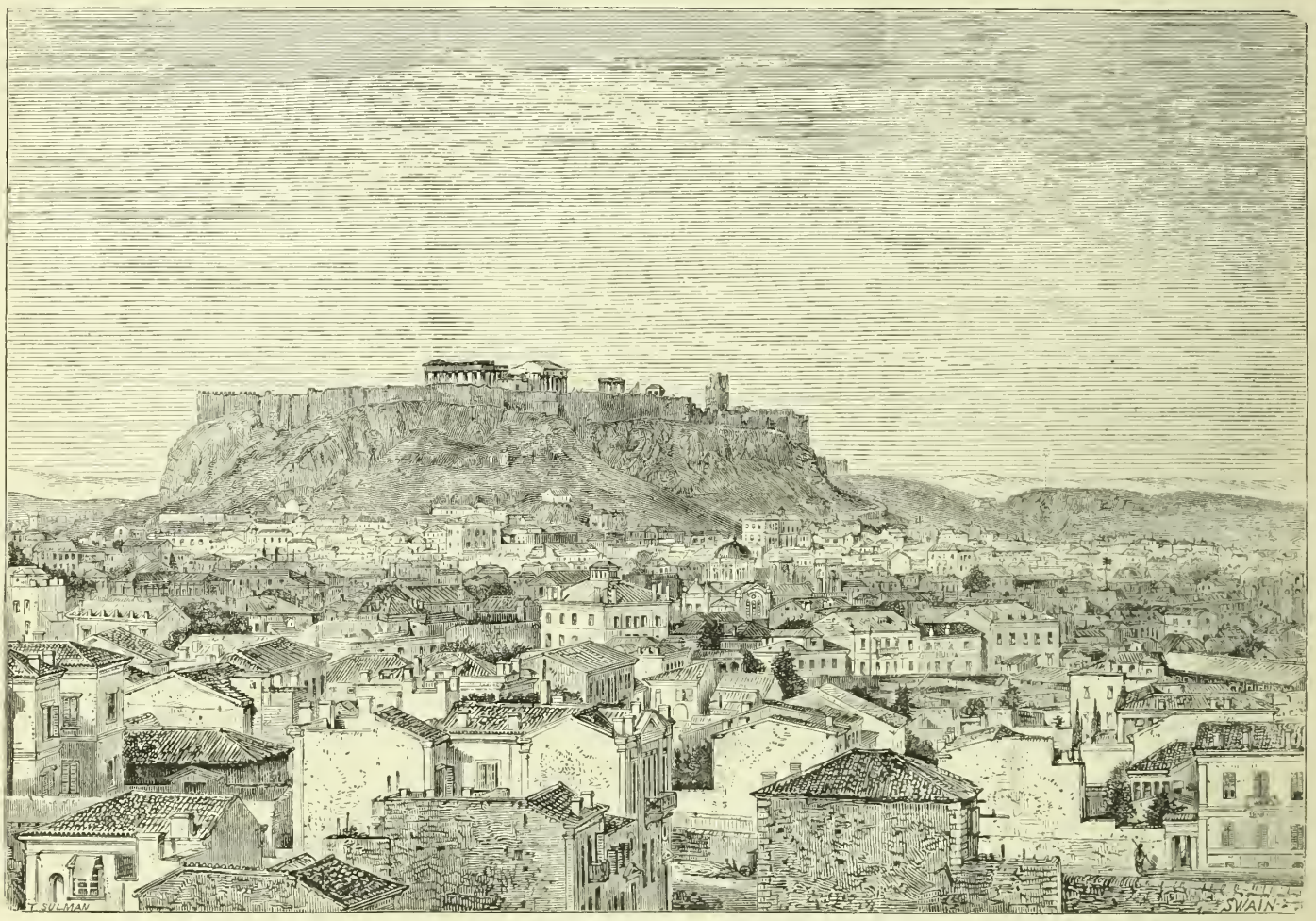
During the stay of the apostles at Thessalonica they lodged in the house of a certain Christian named Jason, who entertained them very courteously. But the Jews would not suffer the apostles to continue at rest. They refused to embrace the gospel themselves, and therefore envied its success, and determined to oppose its progress. Accordingly, they gathered together a great number of lewd and wicked wretches, who beset the house of Jason, intending to take Paul, and deliver him up to an incensed multitude. But in this they were disappointed, Paul and Silas being removed from thence by the Christians, and concealed in some other part of the city.

Their fury, however, was rather exasperated than lessened at losing their prey; and, as they could not find the apostles of the blessed Jesus, they determined to be revenged on Jason, who had concealed them. Accordingly, they seized on him, with some others of the brethren, and carried them before the magistrates of the city, accusing them, as they had before done the apostles themselves at Philippi, of disturbing the peace of the empire, and setting up Jesus as a king, in derogation of the emperor's dignity and authority. This accusation induced both people and magistrates to be their enemies; and though Jason was only accused of harbouring those innovators, yet the magistrates could not be prevailed upon to dismiss him and his companions till they had given security for their appearance.

As soon as the tumult was over, the Thessalonians who had been converted by them sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea, a city about fifty miles south of Thessalonica, but out of the power of their enemies. Here, also, Paul's great love for his countrymen, the Jews, and his earnest desire of their salvation, excited him to preach to them in particular. Accordingly, he entered into their synagogue, and explained the gospel unto them, proving out of the scriptures of the Old Testament the truth of the doctrines he advanced. These Jews were of a more ingenuous and candid temper than those of Thessalonica; and as they heard him with great reverence and attention expound and apply the Scriptures, so they searched diligently whether his proofs were proper and pertinent, and consonant to the sense of the texts he referred to; and, having found everything to be agreeable to what Paul had advanced, many of them believed; and several Gentiles, following their example, became obedient to the faith, among whom were several women of quality. The news of this remarkable success was carried to Thessalonica, and greatly incensed the inveterate enemies of the gospel there, who accordingly repaired to Berea, and raised tumults against the apostles; so that Paul, in order to avoid their fury, was forced to leave the town; but Silas and Timotheus, either less known or less envied, continued still there.

Paul leaving Berea under the conduct of certain guides, it was pretended he designed to retire by sea out of Greece, that his restless enemies might cease their persecution; but the guides, according to Paul's order, brought him to Athens, and left him there, after receiving from him an order for Silas and Timotheus to repair to him as soon as possible.

While St. Paul continued at Athens, expecting the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walked up and down, to take a more accurate survey of the city, which he found mise-



Athens.

(This mark, *, indicates the spot on Mars' Hill where St. Paul is supposed to have stood.)

rably overrun with superstition and idolatry. The inhabitants were remarkably religious and devout; they had a great number of gods, whom they adored: false, indeed, they were, but such as they, being destitute of revelation, accounted true; and so very careful were they that no deity should want due honour from them, that they had an altar inscribed, "To THE UNKNOWN GOD." A great variety of reasons are given for this inscription: some affirm that it was the name which the Pagans generally

gave to the God of the Jews; but others think that it included all the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa, besides the unknown God.

These superstitious practices grieved the spirit of the apostle. Accordingly, he exerted all his strength for their conversion, disputing on the Sabbath-days in the synagogues of the Jews, and at other times taking all opportunities of preaching to the Athenians the coming of the Messiah to save the world.

This doctrine was equally new and strange to the Athenians; and though they did not persecute him as the Jews did, yet his preaching Jesus was considered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as a fabulous legend, and by the more sober part as a discovery of some new gods, which they had not yet placed in their temples. And though they were not unwilling to receive any new deities, yet, as the Areopagus, the supreme court of the city, was to judge of all gods to whom public worship might be allowed, they brought him before those judges, to give an account of his doctrine.

Paul, being placed before the judges of this high assembly, readily gave them an account of his doctrine in a grave and elegant speech, wherein he did not tell them they were horrible and gross idolaters, lest he should offend them, and thereby prevent them from listening to his reasons; but, having commended them for their religious dispositions, he took occasion, from the altar inscribed to the unknown God, to make a proper defence of his doctrine. I endeavour, said he, only to explain that altar to you, and manifest the nature of that God whom ye ignorantly worship, which is the God that made the world and all things therein, and who, being Lord of all, dwells not in temples made with hands, nor is to be worshipped in lifeless idols. As he is the Creator of all things, he cannot be confined to the workmanship of man, whether temples or statues; nor stands in need of sacrifices, since he is the fountain of life to all things. He made from one common original the whole race of mankind, and hath wisely determined their dependence on him, that they might be obliged to seek after him and serve him—a truth perceivable in the darkest state of ignorance, and acknowledged by one of your own poets. If this be the nature of God, it is surely the highest absurdity to represent him by an image or similitude. The Divine patience hath been too much exercised already with such gross abuses in religion, but now expects a thorough reformation, having sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to make him known to the world, and, at the same time, to inform them that he hath appointed a day of general judgment, when the religion of mankind shall be tried by the test of the gospel before his only-begotten Son, who is appointed sole judge of quick and dead, and whose commission to that high office hath been ratified by the

Almighty in raising him from the dead.

On this mention of the resurrection, some of the philosophers mocked and derided him; others, more modest, but not satisfied with the proof he had given, gravely answered, "We will hear thee again of this matter;" after which Paul departed from the court, but not without some success, for a few of his auditors believed and attended his instructions.

CHAPTER IV.

Success of St. Paul's ministry at Corinth and Ephesus.

THUS boldly did this intrepid servant and soldier of Jesus Christ assert the cause of his Divine Master among the great, the wise, and the learned, and reason with great persuasion and eloquence on the nature of God, and the manner in which he has commanded his creatures to worship him, even in spirit and in truth. During St. Paul's stay at Athens, Timothy, according to the order he had received, came to him out of Macedonia, and brought an account that the Christians at Thessalonica were under persecution from their fellow-citizens ever since his departure, at which St. Paul was greatly concerned, and at first inclined to visit them in person to confirm them in the faith they had embraced; but, being hindered by the enemies of the gospel, he sent Timothy to comfort them, and put them in mind of what they had at first heard, namely, that persecution would be the constant attendant on their profession.

On Timothy's departure St. Paul left Athens, and travelled to Corinth, a very populous place, and famous for its trade. Here he found Aquila, and Priscilla, his wife, lately come from Italy, having been banished from Rome by the decree of Claudius; and they being of the same trade he himself had learned in his youth, he wrought with them, that he might not be burdensome to the new converts. Honest ministers are not mercenary.

After some stay in Corinth the apostle was joined by Silas and Timothy, and disputed frequently in the synagogue, reasoning and proving that Jesus was the true Messiah. This exasperated the Jews to the greatest degree, and what they could not conquer by argument and force of reason, they endeavoured to carry by noise and clamour, blended with blasphemies and revilings, the last refuge of an impotent and baffled cause. But St. Paul, to testify his resentment, shook his garments, and told them that since they were determined to pull down the vengeance of Heaven upon their own heads, he was absolutely guiltless and innocent, and would henceforth address himself to the Gentiles. Accordingly, he left them, and repaired to the house of Justus, a religious proselyte, where, by his preaching and miracles, he converted great numbers to the faith, among which were Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue,

Garus, and Stephanus, who with their families were baptized, and admitted members of the Christian church.

But lest the ungrateful, yea, cruel behaviour of unbelievers should discourage this able minister from prosecuting the glorious work of the conversion of sinners, our dear Redeemer appeared to him in a vision, and told him that, notwithstanding the bad success he had hitherto met with, there was a large harvest to be gathered in that place; that he should not be afraid of his enemies, but preach the gospel boldly and securely, for that he himself would protect and preserve him.

About this time he seems to have wrote his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, Silas and Timothy being lately returned from thence, and delivered the message for which he had sent them thither. The principal design of this epistle is to confirm them in the belief of the Christian religion, and excite them to persevere in it, notwithstanding all the malice of their enemies, and the persecutions they must expect to suffer, and to instruct them in the duties of a religious life.

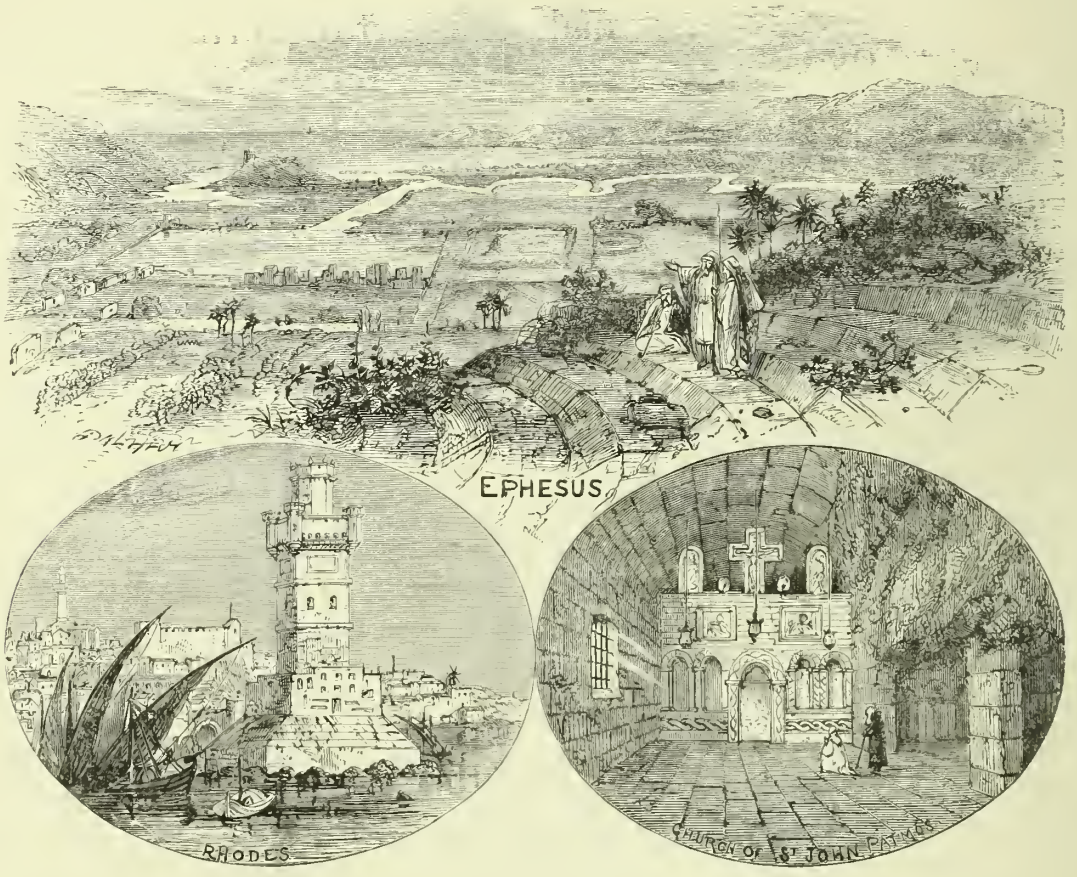
During the apostle's stay at Corinth he wrote his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to supply his absence. In this epistle he again endeavours to confirm their minds in the truth of the gospel, and prevent their being shaken with those troubles which the wicked and unbelieving Jews would be continually raising against them. And because some passages in his former epistle relating to the destruction of the Jews had been misunderstood, as if the day of the Lord was near at hand, he rectifies these mistakes, and shows the signs that must precede our Lord's coming to judgment.

St. Paul, on his leaving the church at Corinth, took ship at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, for Syria, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla; and, on his arrival at Ephesus, he preached awhile in the synagogue of the Jews, promising to return to them after keeping the Passover at Jerusalem. Accordingly, he again took ship, and landed at Cæsarea, and from thence travelled to Jerusalem, where he kept the feast, visited the church, and then repaired to Antioch. Here he stayed some time, and then traversed the countries of Galatia and Phrygia, confirming the new converted Christians, till he came to Ephesus.

During the time he spent in this large circuit Providence took care of the churches of Ephesus and Corinth by means of one Apollos, an eloquent Jew of Alexandria, and well acquainted with the law and writings of the prophets. This man coming to Ephesus, though he was only instructed in the rudiments of Christianity and John's baptism, yet he taught with great courage and a most powerful zeal. After being fully instructed in the faith by Aquila and Priscilla, he passed over into Achaia, being furnished with recom-

mendatory letters by the churches of Ephesus and Corinth. He was of the greatest service in Achaia, in watering what Paul had planted, confirming the disciples, and powerfully convincing the Jews that Jesus was the true Messiah promised in the Scriptures.

While Apollos was thus employed, St. Paul returned to Ephesus, where he fixed his abode for three years, bringing with him Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus, a native of Thessalonica, Timotheus, Erastus of Corinth, and Titus. The first thing he did after his arrival was to examine certain disciples, whether they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed, to which they answered that the doctrine they had received promised nothing



of that nature, nor had they ever heard that such an extraordinary spirit had of late been bestowed upon the church.

This answer surprised the apostle, who asked them in what name they had been baptized, since, in the Christian form, the name of the Holy Ghost was always expressed. They replied that they had only received John's baptism, upon which the apostle informed them that though John's baptism commanded nothing but repentance, yet it tacitly implied the whole doctrine of Christ and the Holy Ghost. When they heard this they were baptized according to the form prescribed by Christ himself—that is, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;

and after the apostle had prayed, and laid his hands over them, they received the gifts of tongues and other miraculous powers then common in the church.

After this he entered into the Jewish synagogues, where, for the first three months, he contended and disputed with the Jews, endeavouring, with great earnestness and resolution, to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion. But when, instead of success, he met with nothing but obstinacy and infidelity, he left the synagogue, and, taking those with him whom he had converted, instructed them and others who resorted to him in the school of one Tyrannus, a place where scholars used to be instructed. In this manner he continued to preach the gospel two whole years, by which means the Jews and proselytes of the whole of proconsular Asia had an opportunity of hearing the glad tidings of salvation. And because miracles are the clearest evidence of a Divine commission, the Almighty was pleased to ratify the doctrine which St. Paul delivered by amazing and miraculous operations, many of which were of a peculiar and extraordinary nature, for he did not only heal those that came to him, but if napkins or handkerchiefs were only touched by him, and applied to the sick, their diseases immediately vanished, and the evil spirits departed out of them that were possessed by them.

About this time the apostle wrote his Epistle to the Galatians, for he had heard that, since his departure, corrupt opinions had crept in among them with regard to the necessity of observing the legal rites, and that several impostors had found admittance into that church, who knew no better method of undermining the doctrine he had planted there than by vilifying his person, slighting him as an apostle only at second-hand, not to be compared with Peter, James, and John, who had familiarly conversed with Christ in the days of his flesh, and been immediately deputed by him. In this epistle, therefore, he reproves them with some necessary severity for their being so soon led out of the right way wherein he had placed them, and so easily suffered themselves to be imposed upon by the crafty artifices of seducers. He vindicates the honour of his apostleship and the immediate receiving of his commission from Christ, wherein he shows that he was not inferior to the very best of the apostles. He largely refutes those Judaical opinions that had tainted and infected them; and the conclusion instructs them in the rules and duties of a holy life.

During St. Paul's stay at Ephesus an accident happened which was attended with great trouble and danger. In this city was the celebrated temple of Diana, a structure so magnificent for beauty, riches, and magnitude, that it was reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world. But what increased its fame and reputation was an image of Diana kept there, which the idolatrous priests persuaded the

people was made by Jupiter himself, and dropped down from heaven; for which reason it was held in great veneration, not only at Ephesus, but throughout all Asia, so that people procured silver shrines or figures of this temple of such a size as to carry them in their pockets, either for curiosity or to stir up their devotion. This proved the source of a great deal of business to the silversmiths of Ephesus, of whom one Demetrius was the chief. This man, plainly perceiving that Christianity tended to the subversion of idolatry, and consequently to the ruin of their gainful employment, called all the artists together, and pathetically represented to them how inevitably they must be reduced to a state of poverty if they suffered Paul to bring their temple and goddess into contempt by persuading people, as he did, that they were no gods which were made by the hands.

This speech of Demetrius fired them with a zeal which they could no longer contain, so that they cried out with one voice, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." They should, indeed, have considered that if their goddess was able to defend herself against the doctrines preached by Paul, neither she nor the temple was in any danger; whereas, if Paul was able to destroy their gods, it was in vain for them to resist him. But interest and superstition, meeting in the minds of a bigoted multitude, admitted of no reason. They were all fired with a zeal for their goddess, and determined, if they could find Paul, to expose him to the beasts in the theatre; for it was customary in those days, at the celebration of their public games and festivals, to expose slaves to the ravage of wild beasts for the diversion of the spectators. The whole city was filled with the tumult; and the crowd, missing Paul, laid hold on Gaius and Aristarchus, two Macedonians of Paul's company, and hurried them into the theatre, with a design to throw them to the wild beasts. Paul, who was at present in a place of security, hearing of the danger to which his brethren were exposed, was very desirous of venturing after them, in order to speak in their behalf; but from this he was at last dissuaded not only by the Christians, but also by the Gentile governors of the theatrical games, who were his friends, and assured him that he would only endanger himself, without rescuing his friends.

The noise and confusion of the multitude were now prodigious, most of them not knowing the reason for which they were come together, and therefore some cried one thing, and some another. In this distraction, Alexander, a Jewish convert, was singled out by the multitude, and, by the instigation of the Jews, was going to make his defence, in which, doubtless, he would have laid the whole blame upon Paul. But the multitude, perceiving him to be a Jew, and therefore suspecting he was one of Paul's associates, raised another outcry for near two hours together,

wherein nothing could be heard but "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." This confusion brought the town-clerk, who kept the register of the games, into the theatre, to suppress, if possible, so uncommon a tumult; and having, with great difficulty, obtained silence, he calmly and discreetly told them that the world was sufficiently acquainted with the devotion paid by the Ephesians to the great goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter, and therefore it was absolutely needless for them to publish it at that time; that if Demetrius and his fraternity had anything to allege against Paul and his companions, the courts were open, and they might bring their accusation against them; or, if they were questioned with regard to the breach of any of their laws, the cause ought to be heard in a regular assembly; that they would do well to consider this, and be quiet, having already rendered themselves obnoxious to the displeasure of the magistrates, if they should think proper to call them to an account for that day's tumult.

This discourse had the desired effect; the multitude were convinced that they had acted very improperly, and therefore repaired to their respective habitations, and Gaius, Aristarchus, and Alexander were released without any hurt. But the escape of Paul was so remarkable that he mentions it as a miraculous deliverance. "We had," says he, "the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death." And in another place he tells us, he "fought with beasts at Ephesus," alluding either to the design of the enraged multitude of throwing him to the wild beasts in the theatre, though their intention was not executed, or to the manners of the people, who sufficiently deserved the character of being savage and brutal in the highest degree.

About this time Paul was informed of some disturbances in the church at Corinth, hatched and fomented by a company of false teachers crept in among them, who endeavoured to draw them into parties and factions by persuading one company to be for Peter, another for Paul, and a third for Apollos, as if the principal part of religion consisted in being of this or that denomination, or in a warm active zeal to depreciate and oppose whoever is not of our own narrow sect.

It is a very weak and slender claim when a man holds his religion by no better title than his having joined himself to such or such a sect or congregation, and is remarkably zealous to promote it; to be childishly and passionately clamorous for some person's particular mode of administration, or some particular opinion; as if religion rather consisted in curious disputes, or in separating from our brethren, than "in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

By these means schisms and factions broke into the Corinthian

church, whereby many wild and extravagant opinions, some of them such as tended to undermine the fundamental articles of Christianity, were planted and had taken root there. To cure these distempers St. Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians, wherein he smartly reproves them for their schisms and parties, conjures them to peace and unity, corrects those gross corruptions that had been introduced among them, and particularly resolves those many cases and controversies wherein they had requested his advice and counsel. Soon after, Apollos determining to go to Crete, together with Zenos, St. Paul sent by them his Epistle to Titus, whom he had made bishop of that island, and had left there for propagating the gospel. In this epistle he instructs him fully in the execution of his office, both with regard to himself and others.

CHAPTER V.

Transactions of St. Paul during the further progress of his ministry, to the time of his arraignment before Felix.

SOON after the tumult at Athens, Paul called the Christians together, and took his leave of them with the most tender expressions of love and affection. He had now spent almost three years at Ephesus, and founded there a very considerable church, of which he had ordained Timothy the first bishop. He first travelled about two hundred miles northward to Troas, before he took ship, expecting to meet Titus there; but, missing him, he pursued his voyage to Macedonia.

On his arrival there he preached the gospel in several places, even as far as Illyricum, now called Sclavonia. During this journey he met with many troubles and dangers—"without were fightings, and within fears;" but God, who comforteth those that are cast down, revived his spirits by the arrival of Titus, who gave him a pleasing account of the good effects his epistle had produced at Corinth. This worthy bishop came thither with large contributions from the church at Corinth; and, from the example of those liberal Christians, St. Paul stirred up the Macedonians to imitate their charity, intending to assist the poor Christians at Jerusalem.

During the stay of Titus in Macedonia Paul wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and sent it to them by Titus and Luke. In this epistle he endeavours to rectify what his former epistle had not effected—to vindicate his apostleship from that contempt and scorn, and himself from those slanders and aspersions which the seducers, who found themselves lashed by his former letter, had cast upon him, together with several other particular cases relating to the church.

About this time, also, he wrote his First Epistle to Timothy, whom he had left at Ephesus, wherein he gives him large directions how to carry himself in the discharge of that great office and authority in the church

committed to his care, and instructs him in the particular qualifications of those he should make choice of as bishops and ministers in the church. He likewise gives him instructions with regard to his giving orders to deaconesses and instructing servants, warning him, at the same time, against that pestilent generation of heretics and seducers that would arise in the church.

During his stay in Greece he went to Corinth, where he wrote his famous Epistle to the Romans, which he sent by Phœbe, a deaconess of the church of Cenchrea, near Corinth. His principal intention, in this epistle, is fully to state and determine the great controversy between the Jews and Gentiles with regard to the obligations of the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, and those principal and material points of doctrine depending upon it, namely, Christian liberty, the use of indifferent things, and the like; and, which is the chief intention of all religion, instructs them, and presses them to perform the duties of a holy and pious life, such as the Christian doctrine naturally recommends.

St. Paul being now determined to return into Syria, in order to convey the contributions to the brethren at Jerusalem, set out on his journey; but, being informed that the Jews had formed a design of killing and robbing him by the way, he returned back into Macedonia, and came to Philippi, from whence he went to Troas, where he stayed seven days. Here he preached to them on the Lord's day, and continued his discourse till midnight, being himself to depart in the morning. The length of his discourse and time of the night caused some of his audience to be overtaken with sleep, and among them a young man named Eutychus, who fell from the third story, and was taken up dead; but the apostle, by his prayers to the throne of grace, presently restored him to life and health!

How indefatigable was the industry of this great apostle! How closely did he tread in the steps of his great Master, who went about doing good! He preached and wrought miracles wherever he came. As a master-builder, he either laid a foundation or raised the superstructure. He was instant in season and out of season, and spared no pains to assist the souls of men.

The night being thus spent in holy exercises, St. Paul took his leave of the brethren in the morning, travelling on foot to Assos, a seaport town, whither he had before sent his companions by sea. From thence they sailed to Mytilene, a city in the isle of Lesbos. The next day they sailed from thence, and came over against Chios, and the day following landed at Trogyllium, a promontory of Ionia, near Samos. The next day they came to Miletus, not putting in at Ephesus, because the apostle was resolved, if possible, to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

On his arrival at Miletus, he sent to Ephesus to summon the elders of

the church, and, on their coming, reminded them of the manner in which he had conversed among them, how faithfully and affectionately he had discharged the offices of his ministry, and how incessantly he had laboured for the good of the souls of men, adding that he had never failed to acquaint them, both in public and private, with whatever might be useful and profitable to them, urging both the Jews and Gentiles to repentance and reformation of life, and a hearty reception of the faith of Christ; that he was now going up to Jerusalem, where he was ignorant of what might befall him, except what had been foretold him by those who were endued with the prophetical gifts of the Holy Ghost, namely, that afflictions and imprisonment would attend him; but that this gave him no concern, being willing to lay down his life whenever the gospel required it, and fully determined to serve faithfully his great Lord and Master. I well know, continued he, that you will see my face no more; but, for my encouragement and satisfaction, ye yourselves can bear me witness that I have not, by concealing any part of the Christian doctrine, betrayed your souls. And as for yourselves, whom God hath made bishops and pastors of his church, you should be careful to feed, guide, and direct those Christians under your inspection, and be infinitely tender of the welfare of souls, for whose redemption the blessed Jesus laid down his life. All the care, therefore, possible for you to use is no more than necessary, for after my departure heretical teachers will appear in the church, to the great danger of the souls of men, seeking, by every crafty method and pernicious doctrine, to gain proselytes to their party, and by that means filling the church of Christ with schisms and factions. Watch ye, therefore, and remember with what tears and sorrow I have, during three years, warned you of these things. And now I recommend you to the Divine favour and protection, and to the rules and instructions of the gospel, which, if adhered to, will undoubtedly dispose and perfect you for that state of happiness which the Almighty hath prepared for good men in the mansions of eternity. You well know that I have, from the beginning, dealt faithfully and uprightly with you; that I have had no covetous designs, or ever desired the riches of other men; nay, I have laboured with mine own hands for my support, and that of my companions; you ought, therefore, to support the weak and relieve the poor, rather than be yourselves chargeable to others, according to that incomparable saying of the great Redeemer of mankind, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If we minutely attend to the whole of this apostle's preaching and writing, we shall find that he ever strenuously inculcates not only points of faith, but also practical duties, without which our faith is vain.

St. Paul, having finished his dis-

course, kneeled down and joined with them in prayer, when they all melted into tears, and, with the greatest expressions of sorrow, attended him to the ship, grieving in the most passionate manner for what he had told them, that "they should see his face no more."

Paul, with his companions, now departed from Miletus, and arrived at Coos, from whence they sailed the next day to Rhodes, two islands in the Ægean Sea; from whence they came to Patara, the metropolis of Lycia, where they went on board another vessel bound for Tyre, in Phœnicia. On his arrival, he visited the brethren there, and continued with them a week, and was advised by some of them, who had the gift of prophecy, not to go up to Jerusalem. But the apostle would by no means abandon his design, or refuse to suffer anything, provided he might spread the gospel of his Saviour. Finding all persuasions were in vain, they all accompanied him to the shore, where he kneeled down and prayed with them; and, after embracing them with the utmost affection, he went on board, and came to Ptolemais, and the next day to Cæsarea.

During their stay in this place, Agabus, a Christian prophet, came thither from Judea, who, taking Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet with it, signifying by this external symbol that the Jews would bind Paul in that manner, and deliver him over to the Gentiles, whereupon both his own companions and the Christians of Cæsarea earnestly besought him that he would not go up to Jerusalem. But the apostle asked them if they intended, by these passionate dissuasives, to add more affliction to his sorrow. "For I am ready," continued he, "not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When the disciples found that his resolution was not to be shaken, they importuned him no further, leaving the event to be determined according to the pleasure of the Most High; and, all things being ready, Paul and his companions set forward on their journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the Christians on their arrival at Jerusalem.

The day after their arrival, Paul and his companions went to the house of St. James the apostle, where the rest of the bishops and governors of the church were met together. After mutual salutations, the apostle gave them a particular account of the success with which God had blessed his endeavours in propagating Christianity among the Gentiles, for which they all joined in thanksgiving to God; but withal told him that he was now come to a place where there were many thousands of Jewish converts, who were all zealous for the law of Moses, and who had been informed that he taught the Jews whom he had converted to renounce circumcision and the ceremonies of the law; that, as soon as the multitude heard of his arrival, they would

all assemble to see how he behaved himself in this matter; and therefore, to prevent disturbance, they thought it advisable for him to join himself with four persons who were at that time to accomplish a vow, and perform the usual rites and ceremonies with them, and provide such sacrifices for them as the law in that case required. St. Paul, who in such cases was willing to become all things to all men, that he might gain the more, consented to their counsel, and, taking the persons with him to the temple, told the priests that the time of a vow they had made being now expired, and having purified themselves according as the nature of their case demanded, they were come to make the offerings required by law.

The seven days in which those sacrifices were to be offered being now almost ended, certain Jews from Asia, finding him in the temple, began to raise a tumult, and, laying hold on Paul, called to their brethren, the Jews, to assist them, declaring that this was the person who everywhere preached doctrines derogatory to the Jewish nation and destructive to the institutions of the law. This accusation, though absolutely false, set the whole city in an uproar, and, seizing on the apostle, they dragged him out of the temple, when the doors were immediately shut, to prevent his returning into that holy place.

As they were proceeding in this manner, Paul asked the governor whether he might have the liberty of speaking to him, who, finding he understood the Greek language, inquired of him whether he was not an Egyptian who, a few years before, had raised a sedition in Judea, and headed a party of four thousand vile and profligate wretches, to which the apostle replied that he was a Jew of Tarsus, a free man of a rich and honourable city; and therefore begged of him that he might have leave to speak to the people. This being readily granted, Paul began thus to address them in the Hebrew language:—

Listen, ye descendants of Jacob, to a person of your own religion, and, like yourselves, a child of Abraham, born in Tarsus, and brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, and fully instructed in the law delivered by Moses to our forefathers, and formerly as zealous for the temple worship as ye are at present. Nay, I persecuted unto death all who believed in Jesus, seizing on all I could find, both men and women, and casting them into prison. But as I was pursuing my journey to execute this commission, and was arrived near Damascus, there appeared, about midday, a light from heaven shining round about me. Terrified at so awful an appearance, I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" to which I answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the voice replied, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." After recovering from the terror with which my mind was filled, I answered,

"What shall I do, Lord?" and he replied, "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." The brilliancy of the glory deprived me of sight, so that my companions led me by the hand to Damascus, where one Ananias, a person well respected by all the Jews of that city, visited me, and said, "Brother Saul, receive thy sight;" and in a moment my eyes were opened, and I saw him standing before me. When he saw that my sight was restored he said to me, The Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob hath appointed thee to know his will, to see the great Messiah, the Holy One of God, and hear the voice of his mouth; for thou art chosen to be a witness to all the nations of the earth of those surprising things thou hast seen and heard. Why, therefore, tarriest thou here any longer? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. After this glorious vision and miraculous power of the Most High, when I was returned from Damascus to Jerusalem, and offering up my prayers in the temple, I fell into a trance, and again saw the great Son of David, who said unto me, Depart quickly from Jerusalem, for the sons of Jacob will refuse to believe thy testimony concerning me. And I answered, Lord, they know how cruelly I used thy saints and followers —that I imprisoned and beat them in every city and in every synagogue. Nay, when they shed the blood of thy holy martyr, Stephen, I was also one of the spectators; I consented to his death; I even kept the raiment of those that slew him. But he replied, Depart: I will send thee to countries far remote, even to the Gentiles.

The Jews had till now listened with some attention to his speech; but, on his mentioning the commission he had received to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, their fury knew no bounds, crying out with one voice, "Away with such a fellow, from the earth."

But the captain of the guard commanded him to be brought within the castle, and that he should be examined by scourging, till he confessed the reason of the uncommon rage shown against him by the people. Accordingly, the lictor bound him, and was going to put the orders he had received into execution, when Paul asked the centurion that stood by whether it was lawful to scourge a citizen of Rome before any sentence had been passed upon him. The centurion, instead of answering the question, repaired immediately to the governor, and desired him to take care how he proceeded against the prisoner, because he was a Roman. On this information the governor came into the prison, and asked Paul whether he was really a free citizen of Rome, and, being told he was, he answered that he himself procured that great privilege by a large sum of money; but Paul answered, "I was free born." On receiving this ac-

count, the governor commanded the centurion not to scourge him, being terrified at what he had already done—his chaining a free denizen of Rome.

The next day he ordered his chains to be taken off; and, that he might thoroughly satisfy himself of the cause of so unusual a tumult on the day preceding, summoned the Sanhedrim to meet, and brought down Paul before them.

The apostle, being thus placed before the great council of the Jews, told them that in all the passages of his life he had taken care to govern his actions by the severest rules of duty and conscience. "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

But, however this expression of St. Paul might tend to show the true state of his mind, the high priest Ananias was so offended at it, that he commanded those who stood next to him to strike him in the face, at which the apostle smartly replied, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall;" on which some of the spectators replied, It is not lawful to revile the high priest of the Almighty; and Paul answered, I did not know that Ananias was appointed by God to be a high priest. But, as he is invested with authority, it is unjust to revile him, God himself having commanded that no man should speak evil of the rulers of the people. And perceiving that the council consisted partly of Sadducees, and partly of Pharisees, he cried aloud, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and am now brought before this tribunal for asserting the resurrection from the dead.

This declaration threw the whole court into confusion, by exciting the regard of the Pharisees, who favoured the doctrine of the resurrection, and incurring the resentment of the Sadducees, who strenuously opposed it.

The dissensions of these sects increased to that degree, that the captain feared Paul would have been pulled in pieces, and therefore took him from the bar, and carried him back to the castle. But, during the silence of the night, he was comforted by extraordinary communications of the Divine Spirit, encouraging him to constancy and resolution, and assuring him that he should, notwithstanding all the malice and wicked designs of his enemies, live to bear his testimony, even in Rome itself.

The next morning, the Jews, whose envy and malice were increased by these dilatory proceedings, determined to use a quicker method of putting a period to his life. In order to this, above forty of the most turbulent entered into a shocking confederacy to kill him, ratifying it by an oath and the most bitter execrations that they would neither eat nor drink till they had put their inhuman design into execution. Accordingly, this design, though probably concluded under the mantle of the night, was discovered to St. Paul by his sister's son, and, at the request of the apostle,

told to the governor himself, who immediately commanded two parties of horse and foot to be ready by nine o'clock that night, in order to conduct St. Paul to Felix, the Roman governor of that province, to whom, also, he sent an account of the whole proceedings of the Jews against the prisoner, and at the same time ordered his accusers also to appear before the Roman magistrate. Accordingly, St. Paul was conducted to Antipatris, and afterwards to Cæsarea, where, the letters being delivered to Felix, the apostle was also presented to him; and, finding that he belonged to the province of Cilicia, he told him that, as soon as his accusers were come down, he would determine the affair, and in the meantime commanded him to be secured in the place called Herod's judgment-hall.

CHAPTER VI.

The transactions of St. Paul from his first trial before Felix till his coming to Rome.

OUR apostle, soon after his arrival, encountered Tertullus, who, in a short but eloquent speech, began to accuse him, charging him with sedition, heresy, and the profanation of the temple. The orator having finished his charge against the apostle, Felix told St. Paul that he was now at liberty to make his defence, which he did in the following manner:—

I answer this charge of the Jews with the greater satisfaction before thee, because thou hast for many years been a judge of this nation. About twelve days since I repaired to Jerusalem to worship the God of Jacob. But I neither disputed with any man, nor endeavoured to stir up the people in the synagogues or the city. Nor can they prove the charge they have brought against me. This, however, I readily confess—that after the way which they call heresy, so

Felix.

worship I the God of my fathers; and according to this faith I am careful to maintain a clear and quiet conscience both towards God and man. After I had spent some years in distant countries I repaired to Jerusalem with the alms I had collected in other provinces for the poor of mine own nation, and offerings to

the God of Jacob; and, while I was performing the duties of religion, certain Asiatic Jews found me in the temple, purified according to the law, but neither attended with a multitude of followers, nor the least tumultuous assembly. It was, therefore, necessary that these Jews should have been here if they had anything to allege against me. Nay, I appeal to those of the Sanhedrim here present, if anything has been laid to my charge except the objections of the Sadducees, who violently opposed me for asserting the doctrine of the resurrection.

Felix, having thus heard both parties, refused to pass any final sentence till he had more fully advised about it, and consulted Lysias, the governor of the castle, who was the most proper person to give an account of the sedition and tumult, commanding, in the meantime, that St. Paul should be kept under a guard, but, at the same time, enjoy the liberty of being visited by his friends, and receiving from them any office of friendship.

Soon after this, Felix's wife, Drusilla, a Jewess, and daughter of the elder Herod, came down to him at Cæsarea, in whose presence the governor sent for Paul, and gave him leave to explain the doctrines of Christianity. In this discourse the apostle took occasion to insist upon the most important points both of faith and practice, particularly the influence which a future judgment should have upon the whole tenor of the life and conduct.

This discourse was wisely adapted to the state and temper of Felix, though, when St. Paul pathetically described the terrors of the last judgment, Felix trembled on his throne, and was so greatly affected that he caused the apostle to break off abruptly, telling him that he would hear the remainder of his discourse at a more convenient season. And certainly Felix had sufficient reason to tremble, and his conscience to be sensibly alarmed at these reflections, for he was a man notoriously infamous for rapine and violence. Tacitus tells us that he made his will the law of his government, practising all manner of cruelty and injustice. To these qualities he added bribery and covetousness, and therefore often sent for our apostle to discourse with him, expecting he would have given him a considerable sum for his release, having, in all probability, heard that St. Paul had brought a large quantity of money to Jerusalem. But, finding no offers were made him either by the apostle himself or his friends, he kept him prisoner two years, when he himself being discharged from his office by Nero, he left Paul in prison, in order to gratify the malice of the Jews, and engage them to speak the better of his government after his departure from Judea.

Felix was succeeded in the government of the province by Portius Festus, before whom, at his first coming to Jerusalem, the high priest and Sanhedrim preferred an indictment against Paul, desiring that he

might be sent up to Jerusalem, in order to his trial, intending to assassinate him by the way. But Festus told them that he was shortly going himself to Cæsarea, and that, if they had any complaint against Paul, they should come down thither and accuse him. Accordingly, as soon as he was come to Cæsarea, he ascended the

Festus.

tribunal, where the Jews renewed the charge they had before brought against Paul; but the apostle soon cleared himself of every part of the charge, they not being able to prove anything against him. Festus, however, being willing to procure the favour of the Jews at his entrance on the government, asked him whether he would go up and be tried before him at Jerusalem. But the apostle, well knowing the consequences of such a proposal, answered, as a Roman, "I appeal unto Cæsar."

This method of appealing was common among the Romans, and introduced to defend and secure the lives and fortunes of the people from the unjust encroachments and rigorous severities of the magistrates, whereby it was lawful, in cases of oppression, to appeal to the people for redress—a thing more than once settled by the sanction of the Valerian law.

Some time after St. Paul had appealed unto Cæsar, King Agrippa, who succeeded Herod in the tetrarchate of Galilee, and his sister Bernice, came to Cæsarea to visit the new governor. Festus embraced this opportunity of mentioning the case of our apostle to King Agrippa, together with the remarkable tumult this affair had occasioned among the Jews, and the appeal he had made to Cæsar. This account excited the curiosity of King Agrippa, and he was desirous of hearing himself what St. Paul had to say in his own vindication. Accordingly, the next day the king and his sister, accompanied by Festus the governor, and several other persons of distinction, came into the court with a pompous and splendid retinue, where the prisoner was brought before them. On his appearing, Festus informed the court how greatly he had been importuned by the Jews, both at Cæsarea and Jerusalem, to put the

prisoner to death as a malefactor; but having, on examination, found him guilty of no capital crime, and the prisoner himself having appealed unto Cæsar, he was determined to send him to Rome, but was willing to have his cause debated before Agrippa, that he might be furnished with some material particulars to send with him,

Agrippa.

it being highly absurd to send a prisoner without signifying the crimes alleged against him.

Festus having finished his speech, Agrippa told Paul he was now at liberty to make his own defence; and silence being made, he delivered himself in the following manner, addressing his speech particularly to Agrippa:—

I consider it as a peculiar happiness, King Agrippa, that I am to make my defence against the accusations of the Jews before thee, because thou art well acquainted with all their customs, and the questions commonly debated among them. I therefore beseech thee to hear me patiently. All the Jews are well acquainted with my manner of life from my youth, the greatest part of it having been spent with mine own countrymen at Jerusalem. They also know that I was educated under the institutions of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion, and am now arraigned for a tenet believed by all their fathers—a tenet sufficiently credible in itself, and plainly revealed in the Scriptures; I mean, the resurrection of the dead. Why should any mortal think it either incredible or impossible that God should raise the dead? I, indeed, once thought myself indispensably obliged to oppose the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor was I satisfied with imprisoning and punishing with death itself the saints I found at Jerusalem; I even persecuted them in strange cities, whither my implacable zeal pursued them, having procured authority for that purpose from the chief priests and elders. Accordingly, I departed for Damascus, with a commission from the Sanhedrim; but, as I was travelling towards that city, I saw at mid-day, O king, a light from heaven, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, encompassing me and my

companions. On seeing this awful appearance, we all fell to the earth, and I heard a voice, which said to me, in the Hebrew language, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;" to which I answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" And he replied, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But be not terrified; arise from the earth; for I have appeared unto thee, that thou mightest be both a witness of the things thou hast seen, and also of others which I will hereafter reveal unto thee. My power shall deliver thee from the Jews and Gentiles, to whom now I send thee to preach the gospel, to withdraw the veil of darkness and ignorance, to turn them from falsehood unto truth, and from the power of Satan unto God. Accordingly, King Agrippa, I readily obeyed the heavenly vision; I preached the gospel first to the inhabitants of Damascus, then to those of Jerusalem and Judea, and afterwards to the Gentiles, persuading them to forsake their iniquities, and, by sincere repentance, turn to the living God. These endeavours to save the souls of sinful mortals exasperated the Jews, who caught me in the temple, and entered into a conspiracy to destroy me; but, by the help of Omnipotence, I still remain a witness to all the human race, preaching nothing but what Moses and all the prophets foretold; namely, that the Messiah should suffer, be the first that should rise from the chambers of the grave, and publish the glad tidings of salvation, both to the Jews and Gentiles.

While the apostle thus pleaded for himself, Festus cried out, Paul, thou art mad; too much study hath deprived thee of thy reason. But Paul answered, I am far, most noble Festus, from being transported with idle and distracted ideas; the words I speak are dictated by truth and sobriety; and I am persuaded that King Agrippa himself is not ignorant of these things, for they were transacted openly before the world. I am confident, King Agrippa, that thou believest the prophets, and therefore must know that all their predictions were fulfilled in Christ. To which Agrippa answered, Thou hast almost persuaded me to embrace the Christian faith. And Paul replied, I sincerely wish that not only thou, but also all that hear me, were not almost, but altogether the same as I myself, except being prisoners.

It being now finally determined that Paul should be sent to Rome, he was, with several other prisoners of consequence, committed to the care of Julius, commander of a company belonging to the legion of Augustus; and was accompanied in this voyage by St. Luke, Aristarchus, Trophimus, and some others not mentioned by the sacred historian.

In September, 56, or, according to others, 57, they embarked on board a ship of Adramyttium, and sailed to Sidon, where the centurion courteously gave the apostle leave to go on shore to visit his friends and refresh

himself. After a short stay they sailed for Cyprus, and arrived opposite the Fair Havens, a place near Myra, a city of Lycia. The season being far advanced, and Paul foreseeing it would be a dangerous voyage, he endeavoured to persuade them to put in and winter there; but the Roman centurion, preferring the opinion of the master of the ship, and the harbour being at the same time incommodious, resolved, if possible, to reach Phenice, a port of Crete, and winter there. But they soon found themselves disappointed, for the fine southerly gale, which had favoured them for some time, suddenly changed into a stormy and tempestuous wind from the north-east, which blew with such violence that the ship was

Malta.

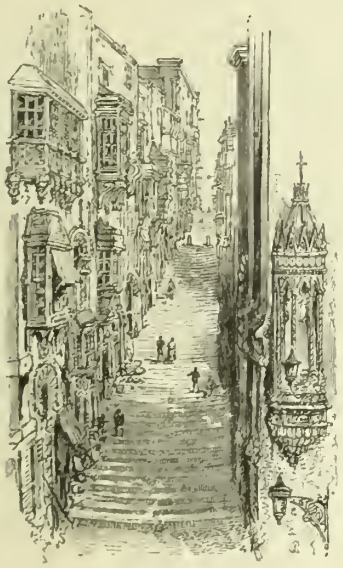
obliged to sail before it; and, to prevent her foundering, they threw overboard the principal part of her lading.

In this desperate and uncomfortable condition they continued fourteen days, and, on the fourteenth night, the sailors, upon sounding, found they were near some coast, and therefore, to avoid the rocks, thought proper to come to an anchor till the morning might give them better information.

During the time they continued at anchor, waiting for the light of the morning, St. Paul prevailed upon them to eat and refresh themselves, having fasted a long time, assuring them they should all escape.

The Shipwreck of St Paul

The country on which they were cast was, as St. Paul had foretold, an island called Melita, now Malta, situated in the Libyan Sea, between Syracuse and Africa. Here they met with great civility from a barbarous people, who treated them with humanity, entertaining them with all the necessary accommodations; but while St. Paul was laying a few sticks on the fire, a viper, enlivened by the heat, came from among the wood and fastened on his hand. On seeing this,



A Street in Malta.

the inhabitants of the island concluded that he was certainly some notorious murderer, whom the Divine vengeance, though it suffered him to escape the sea, had reserved for a more public and solemn execution. But when they saw him shake off the venomous creature into the fire, and no manner of harm ensue, they changed their sentiments, and cried out that he was a god.

After three months' stay in this island, the centurion, with his charge, went on board the Castor and Pollux, a ship of Alexandria, bound to Italy. They put in at Syracuse, where they tarried three days, sailed thence to Rhegium, and so to Puteoli, where they landed; and, finding some Christians there, stayed, at their request, a week with them, and then set forward on their journey to Rome. The Christians of this city, hearing of the apostle's coming, went to meet him as far as Three Taverns, about thirty miles from Rome, and others as far as the Appii Forum, fifty-one miles distant from the capital. They kindly embraced each other, and the liberty he saw the Christians enjoy at Rome greatly tended to enliven the spirits of the apostle.

CHAPTER VII.

The transactions of St. Paul from his arrival at Rome till his martyrdom.

HAVING refreshed himself after the fatigue of his voyage, the apostle sent for the heads of the Jewish consistory there, and related the cause of his coming to them in the following manner:—

Though I have been guilty of no violation of the laws of our religion, yet I was delivered by the Jews at Jerusalem to the Roman governors, who more than once would have acquitted me, as innocent of any capital offence; but, by the perverseness of my persecutors, I was obliged to appeal unto Cæsar.—Not that I had anything to accuse my nation of: I had recourse to this method merely to clear my own innocence.

Having thus removed a popular prejudice, he added that the true cause of his sufferings was what their own religion had taught him—the belief and expectation of a future resurrection. But his discourse had different effects on different hearers, some being convinced, and others persisting in their infidelity.

For two whole years Paul dwelt at Rome, in a house he had hired for his own use, wherein he constantly employed himself in preaching and writing for the good of the church.

Among others of the apostle's converts at Rome was one Onesimus, who had formerly been a servant to Philemon, a person of distinction in Colosse, but had run away from his master, and taken with him some things of value. Having rambled as far as Rome, he was now converted by St. Paul, and by him returned to his master, with a short recommendatory letter, earnestly desiring him to pardon him, and, notwithstanding his former faults, to treat him kindly, and use him as a brother, promising withal that, if he had wronged or owed him anything, he himself would repay it.

This epistle may be considered as a masterpiece of eloquence in the persuasive way; for the apostle has herein had recourse to all the considerations which friendship, religion, piety, and tenderness can inspire, to reconcile an incensed master to his servant.

The Christians of Philippi, hearing of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, and not knowing what straits he might be reduced to, raised a contribution for him, and sent it by Epaphroditus, their bishop, by whom he returned an epistle to them, wherein he gives some account of the state of his affairs at Rome, gratefully acknowledges their kindness to him, warns them against the dangerous opinions which the Judaising teachers began to vent among them, and advises them to live in continual obedience to Christ, to avoid disputations, delight in prayer, be courageous under affliction, united in love, and clothed with humility, in imitation of the blessed Jesus, who so far humbled himself as to become "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

St. Paul had lived three years at Ephesus, preaching the gospel to the numerous inhabitants of that city, and was, therefore, well acquainted with the state and condition of the place, so that, taking the opportunity of Tychicus's going thither, he wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians, wherein he endeavours to countermine the principles and practices both of the Jews and Gentiles, to confirm them in the belief and practices of the Christian doctrine, and to instruct them fully in the great mysteries of the gospel—their redemption and justification by the death of Christ, their gratuitous election, their union with the Jews in one body, of which Christ is the head, and the glorious exaltation of that head above all creatures, both spiritual and tempo-

ral, together with many excellent precepts, both as to the general duties of religion and the duties of their particular relations.

St. Paul himself had never been at Colosse; but Epaphras, who was then at Rome, a prisoner with him, had preached the gospel there with great success; and from him he might learn that certain false teachers had endeavoured to persuade the people that they ought not to apply to God by Jesus Christ, who, since his ascension, was so far exalted above them that angels were now become the proper mediators between God and man, and therefore, in opposition to this, as well as other seductions of the same nature, he wrote his Epistle to the Colossians, wherein he magnificently displays the Messiah, and all the benefits flowing from him, as being the image of his Father, the Redeemer of all mankind, the reconciler of all things to God, and the Head of the church, giving life and vigour to all its members.

By what means St. Paul was delivered from his imprisonment, and discharged from the accusation the Jews brought against him, we have no account in history; but it is natural to suppose that, not having sufficient proof of what they alleged, or being informed that the crimes they accused him of were no violations of the Roman law, they durst not implead him before the emperor, and so permitted him to be discharged of course. But, by whatever means he procured his liberty, he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews before he left Italy, from whence he dates his salutations.

The principal design of it is to magnify Christ and the religion of the gospel above Moses and the Jewish economy, in order to establish and confirm the converted Jews in the firm belief and profession of Christianity, notwithstanding the trouble and persecutions that would certainly attend them.

Having thus discharged his ministry, both by preaching and writing, in Italy, St. Paul, accompanied by Timothy, prosecuted his long-intended journey into Spain, and, according to the testimony of several writers, crossed the sea, and preached the gospel in Britain.

What success he had in these western parts is not known; he, however, continued there eight or nine months, and then returned again to the East, visited Sicily, Greece, and Crete, and then repaired into Judea.

Here he met with Peter, and was, together with him, thrown into prison, doubtless in the general persecution raised against the Christians, under pretence that they had set fire to the city. How long he remained in prison is uncertain; nor do we know whether he was scourged before his execution. He was, however, allowed the privilege of a Roman citizen, and therefore beheaded.

Being come to the place of execution, which was the Aquæ Salviæ, three miles from Rome, he cheerfully, after a solemn preparation, gave his

neck to the fatal stroke; and from this vale of misery passed to the blissful regions of immortality, to the kingdom of his beloved Master, the great Redeemer of the human race. He was buried in the Via Ostiensis, about two miles from Rome; and about the year 317, Constantine the Great, at the instance of Pope Sylvester, built a stately church over his grave, adorned it with a hundred marble columns, and beautified it with the most exquisite workmanship.

St. Paul seems, indeed, to have been eminently fitted for the apostleship of the Gentiles, to contend with and confute the grave and the wise, the acute and the subtle, the sage and the learned, of the heathen world, and to wound them with arrows from their own quiver. He seldom, indeed, made use of learning and philosophy, it being more agreeable to the designs of the gospel to confound the wisdom and learning of the world by the plain doctrine of the Cross.

He was humble to the lowest step of debasement and condescension, none ever thinking better of others, or more meanly of himself; and though, when he had to deal with envious and malicious adversaries, who endeavoured, by vilifying his person, to obstruct his ministry, he knew how to magnify his office, and to let them know that he was not inferior to the chiefest of the apostles, yet at other times he always declared to the world that he considered himself "the least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle;" and, as if this were not enough, he formed a word on purpose to express his humility, styling himself *Elachistoteron*—"less than the least of all saints;" nay, the very chief of sinners. His temperance and sobriety were likewise remarkable, for he often abridged himself of the conveniency of lawful and necessary accommodations.

What he taught to others he practised himself: his conversation was in heaven, and his desires were to depart and to be with Christ, and hence it is very probable that he always led a single life, though some of the ancients rank him among the married apostles.

His kindness and charity were remarkable; he had a compassionate tenderness for the poor, and a quick sense of the wants of others. To what church soever he came, it was always one of his first cares to make provision for the poor, and to stir up the bounty of the rich and wealthy; nay, he himself worked often with his own hands, not only to maintain himself, but also to help and relieve them. But his charity to the souls of men was infinitely greater, fearing no dangers, refusing no labours, going through good and evil report, that he might gain men over to the knowledge of the truth, bring them out of the crooked paths, and place them in the strait way that leadeth to life eternal.

Nor was his charity to men greater than his zeal to God, labouring with all his might to promote the honour

of his Master. When at Athens he saw them involved in the grossest superstition and idolatry, and giving the honour that was due to God alone to statues and images, this fired his zeal, and he could not but let them know the sentiments of his mind, and how greatly they dishonoured God, the great Maker and Preserver of the world. Nor, in the course of a most extensive ministry, was he tired with the dangers and difficulties he met with, or the troubles and oppositions that were raised against him.

This will easily appear if we take a survey of what trials and sufferings he underwent, some part whereof are thus briefly summed up by himself: —In labours abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft; thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice suffered shipwreck, a night and a day in the deep; in journeying often, in perils of water, in perils by his countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst; in fastings often; in cold and nakedness; and, besides those things that were without, which daily came upon him, the care of all the churches: an account, though very great, yet far short of what he endured. He did not want solicitations both from Jews and Gentiles, and might doubtless, in some measure, have made his own terms, had he been false to his trust, and quitted that way which was then, alas! everywhere spoken against. But these things weighed little with our apostle, who counted not his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus; and therefore, when he thought himself under the sentence of death, could triumphantly say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." In short, he was a man in whom the grace of God was displayed with peculiar lustre, and who gave the most convincing proof that the influence of gospel principles exceeds all moral and legal obligations.

Entrance-hall from Gateway in South Wall of the Temple.

ST. ANDREW.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Andrew from his birth to the ascension of the blessed Jesus.

THIS apostle was born at Bethsaida, a city of Galilee, built on the banks of the Lake of Genesareth, son to John, or Jonas, a fisherman of that town. He was brother to Simon Peter, but whether elder or younger is not certainly known, though the generality of the ancients intimate that he was the younger. He was brought up to his father's trade, at which he laboured till our blessed Saviour called him to be a fisher of men, for which he was, by some preparatory instructions, qualified even before the appearance of the Messiah.

John the Baptist had lately preached the doctrine of repentance, and was, by the generality of the Jews, from the impartiality of his precepts and the remarkable strictness and austerity of his life, held in great veneration.

In the number of his followers was our apostle, who accompanied him beyond Jordan, when the Messiah, who had some time before been baptized, came that way. Upon his approach the Baptist pointed him out as the Messiah, styling him "the Lamb of God," the true sacrifice, that was to expiate the sins of the world. As soon as the Baptist had given this character of Jesus, Andrew and another disciple, probably St. John, followed the Saviour of mankind to the place of his abode.

After some conversation with him Andrew departed, and, having found his brother Simon, informed him that he had discovered the great Messiah, so long expected by the house of Jacob, and accordingly brought him

to Jesus. They did not, however, stay long with their Master, but returned to their calling.

Something more than a year after, Jesus, passing through Galilee, found Andrew and Peter fishing on the Sea of Galilee, where he fully satisfied them of the greatness and Divinity of his person by a miraculous draught of fishes, which they took at his command. He now told them that they should enter on a different series of labours, and, instead of fish, they should, by the efficacy and influence of their doctrine upon the heart and conscience, catch men, commanding them to follow him as his immediate disciples and attendants; and accordingly they left all, and followed him.

The Jordan below Jericho.

CHAPTER II.

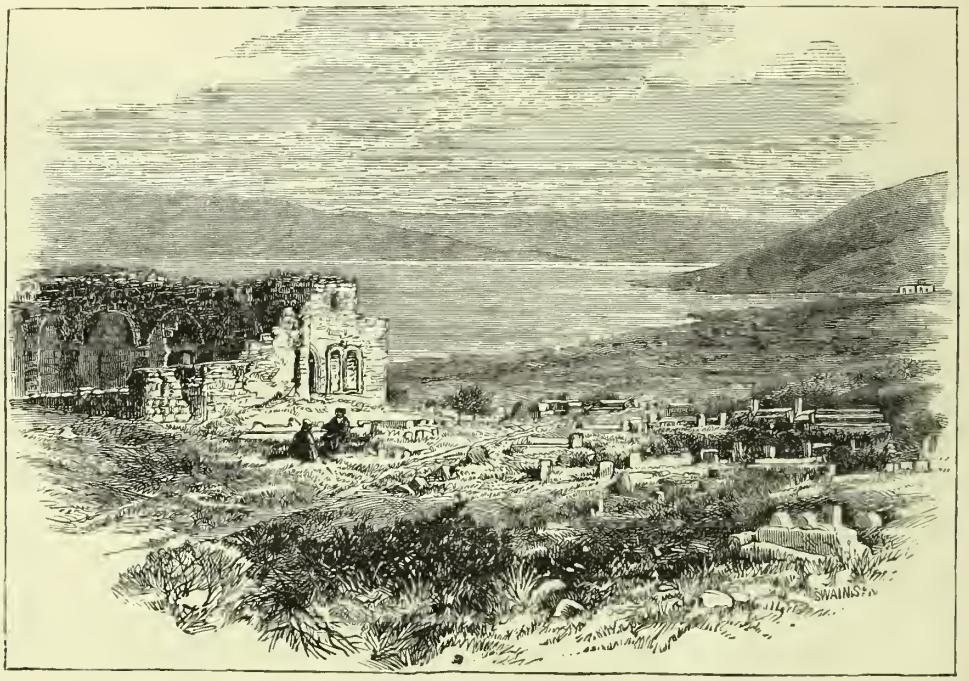
The transactions of St. Andrew from our blessed Saviour's ascension till his martyrdom.

AFTER the ascension of the blessed Jesus into heaven, and the descension of the Holy Ghost on the apostles to qualify them for their great undertaking, St. Andrew, according to the generality of ancient writers, was chosen to preach the gospel in Scythia and the neighbouring countries. Accordingly, he departed from Jerusalem, and first travelled through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia, instructing the inhabitants in the faith of Christ, and continued his journey along the Euxine Sea into the deserts of Scythia. An ancient author tells us that he first came to Amynsus, where, being entertained by a Jew, he went into the synagogue, preached to them concerning Jesus, and from the prophecies of the Old Testament

proved him to be the Messiah and Saviour of the world. Having converted many here, he settled the times of their public meetings, and ordained them priests.

He went next to Trapezium, a maritime city on the Euxine Sea, from whence, after visiting many places, he came to Nice, where he stayed two years, preaching and working miracles with great success. After leaving Nice he passed to Nicomedia, and from thence to Chalcedon, whence he sailed through the Propontis, came by the Euxine Sea to Heraclea, and afterwards to Amastris. In all these places he met with the greatest difficulties, but overcame them by invincible patience and resolution.

He next came to Sinope, a city situated on the same sea, and famous both for the birth and burial of King



Tiberias.

Mithridates. Here he met with his brother Peter, and stayed with him a considerable time at this place. The inhabitants of Sinope were mostly Jews, who, partly from a zeal for their religion, and partly from their barbarous manners, were exasperated against St. Andrew, and entered into a confederacy to burn the house in which he lodged; but, being disappointed in their design, they treated him with the most savage cruelty, throwing him on the ground, stamping upon him with their feet, pulling and dragging him from place to place, some beating him with clubs, some pelting him with stones, and others, to satisfy their brutal revenge, biting off his flesh with their teeth, till, apprehending they had entirely deprived him of life, they cast him out into the fields. But he miraculously recovered, and returned publicly into the city, by which, and

other miracles he wrought among them, he converted many from the error of their ways, and induced them to become disciples of the blessed Jesus.

Departing from Sinope, he returned to Jerusalem; but he did not continue long in his native country, returning again to the province allotted to him for the exercise of his ministry, which greatly flourished through the power of the Divine grace that attended it.

He travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Achaia, and Epirus, preaching the gospel, propagating Christianity, and confirming the doctrine he taught with signs and miracles. At last he came to Patræ, a city of Achaia, where he gave his last and greatest testimony to the gospel of his Divine Master, sealing it with his blood.

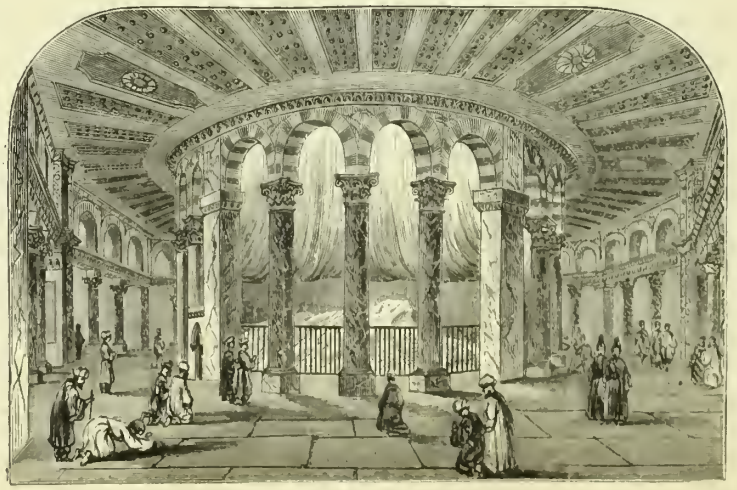
Ægenas, proconsul of Achaia, came at this time to Patræ, where, observing that multitudes had abandoned the heathen religion and embraced the gospel of Christ, he had recourse to every method, both of favour and cruelty, to reduce the people to their old idolatry. The apostle, whom no difficulties or dangers could deter from performing the duties of his ministry, addressed himself to the proconsul, calmly put him in mind that, being only a judge of men, he ought to revere him who was the supreme and impartial Judge of all, pay him the Divine honours due to his exalted majesty, and abandon the impieties of his idolatrous worship; observing to him that, if he would renounce his idolatries and heartily embrace the Christian faith, he should, with him and the members who had believed in the Son of God, receive eternal happiness in the Messiah's kingdom. The proconsul answered that he himself should never embrace the religion he mentioned, and that the only reason why he was so earnest with him to sacrifice to the gods was, that those whom he had everywhere seduced might, by his example, be brought back to the ancient religion they had forsaken. The apostle replied that he saw it was in vain to endeavour to persuade a person incapable of sober counsels, and hardened in his own blindness and folly; that, with regard to himself, he might act as he pleased, and, if he had any torment greater than another, he might heap that upon him, as the greater constancy he showed in his sufferings for Christ, the more acceptable he should be to his Lord and Master. Ægenas could hold no longer, but passed sentence of death upon him. He first ordered him to be scourged, seven lictors successively whipping his naked body, and seeing his invincible patience and constancy, commanded him to be crucified, but to be fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails, that his death might be more lingering and tedious. As he was led to the place of execution, walking with a cheerful and composed mind, the people cried out that a good and innocent man was unjustly con-

demned to die. On his coming near the cross, he saluted it in the following manner:—"I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it, and adorned with his members as with so many inestimable jewels. I therefore come joyfully and triumphing to it, that it may receive me as a disciple and follower of him who once hung upon it, and be the means of carrying me safe to my Master, being the instrument on which he redeemed me."

After offering up his prayers to the throne of grace, and exhorting the people to constancy and perseverance in the faith he had delivered to them, he was fastened to the cross, on which he hung two whole days, teaching and instructing the people. In the meantime great interest was made to the proconsul to spare his life; but the apostle earnestly begged of the Almighty that he might now depart, and seal the truth of his religion with his blood. His prayers were heard, and he immediately expired on the last day of November, but in what year is uncertain.

There seems to have been something peculiar in the cross on which he suffered, and it is commonly thought to have been a cross decussate, or two pieces of timber crossing each other in the centre in the form of the letter X, hence usually known by the name of St. Andrew's cross, though some affirm that he was crucified on an olive-tree.

His body, being taken from the cross, was decently and honourably interred by Maximillia, a lady of great quality and estate, and who, Nicephorus tells us, was wife to the proconsul. Constantine the Great afterwards removed his body to Constantinople, and buried it in the great church he had built to the honour of the apostles; but this structure being taken down some hundreds of years after, in order to rebuild it, by Justinian the emperor, the body of St. Andrew was found in a wooden coffin, and again deposited in its proper place.



The Rock under the Dome.

ST. JAMES THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

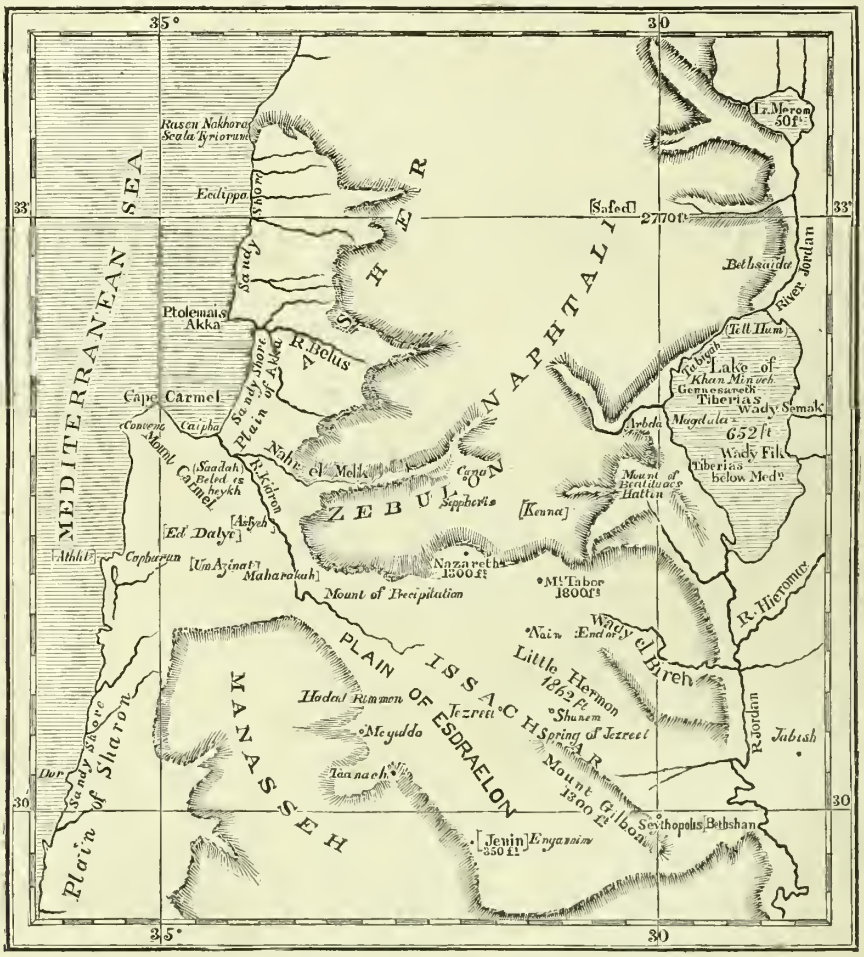
The transactions of St. James the Great from his birth to the ascension of the Son of God.

THIS apostle, who was surnamed the Great, by way of distinction from another of that name, was the son of Zebedee, and by trade a fisherman, to which he applied himself with remarkable assiduity, and was exercising his employment when the Saviour of the world, passing by the Sea of Galilee, saw him with his brother in the ship, and called them both to be his disciples. Nor was the call in vain; they cheerfully complied with it, and immediately left all to follow him, readily delivering themselves up to perform whatever service he should appoint them.

Soon after this he was called, from the station of an ordinary disciple, to the apostolical office, and even honoured with some particular favours beyond most of the apostles, being one of the three whom our Lord made choice of as his companions in the more intimate transactions of his life, from which the rest were excluded. Thus, with Peter and his brother John, he attended his Master when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. He was admitted to Christ's glorious transfiguration on the mount; and when the holy Jesus was to undergo his bitter agonies in the garden, as preparatory sufferings to his passion, James was one of the three taken to be a spec-

tator of them. Nor was it the least instance of that particular honour our Lord conferred on these apostles that, at his calling them to the apostolate, he gave them a new name and title: Simon he called Peter, or a rock, and James and John, who were brothers, Boanerges, or the sons of thunder.

Some think that this name was given them on account of their loud and bold preaching the gospel to the world, fearing no threatenings, despising all opposition, and going on thundering in the ears of a drowsy and sleepy world, rousing and awakening the consciences of men with the



Plain of Esdraelon and Galilee.

earnestness and vehemence of their preaching, which resembled thunder, as the voice of God powerfully shakes the natural world, and breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. Others think it relates to the doctrines they delivered, teaching the great mysteries and speculations of the gospel in a more profound and lofty strain than the rest.

But, however this be, our blessed Saviour doubtless alluded, by this term, to the furious and resolute disposition of these two brothers, who seem to have been of a more fiery temper than the rest of the apostles,

of which we have this memorable instance. When our Lord was determined on his journey to Jerusalem, he sent some of his disciples before him to make preparations for his coming; but, on their entering a village of Samaria, they were rudely rejected, from the old grudge that subsisted between the Samaritans and Jews, and because our Saviour, by going up to Jerusalem, seemed to slight their place of worship on Mount Gerizim. This piece of rudeness and inhumanity was so highly resented by St. James and his brother that they came to Jesus, desiring to know if he would not imitate Elias, by calling down fire from heaven to consume this barbarous, inhospitable people. Thus we find the best of men are but men, and that corrupt nature will sometimes appear even in renewed minds. But the holy Jesus soon convinced them of their mistake

Samaritan Place of Sacrifice, Mount Gerizim.

by telling them that, instead of destroying, he was come to save the lives of the children of men.

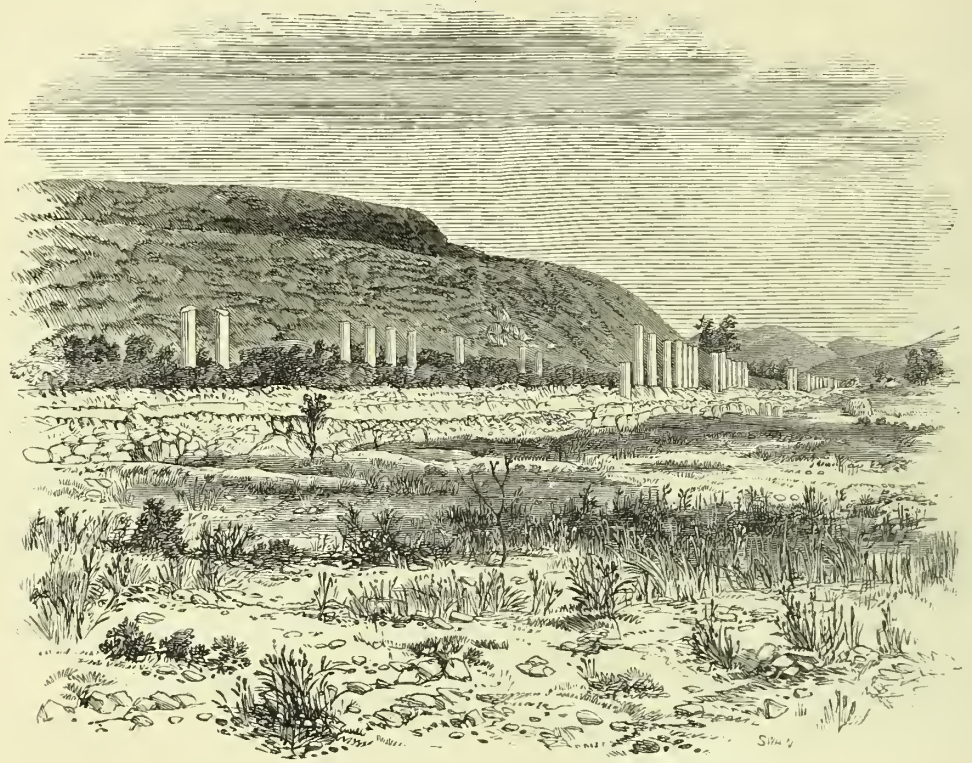
CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. James from the Messiah's ascension to his sealing the truth of the gospel with his blood.

SOPHRONIUS tells us that, after the ascension of the blessed Jesus, this apostle preached to the Jewish converts who were dispersed after the death of Stephen. The Spanish writers affirm that, after preaching the gospel in several parts of Judea and Samaria, he visited Spain, where he planted Christianity, and appointed some select disciples to perfect what he had begun; but if we consider the shortness of St. James's life, and that the apostles continued in a body at Jerusalem, even after the dispersion of the other Christians, we shall

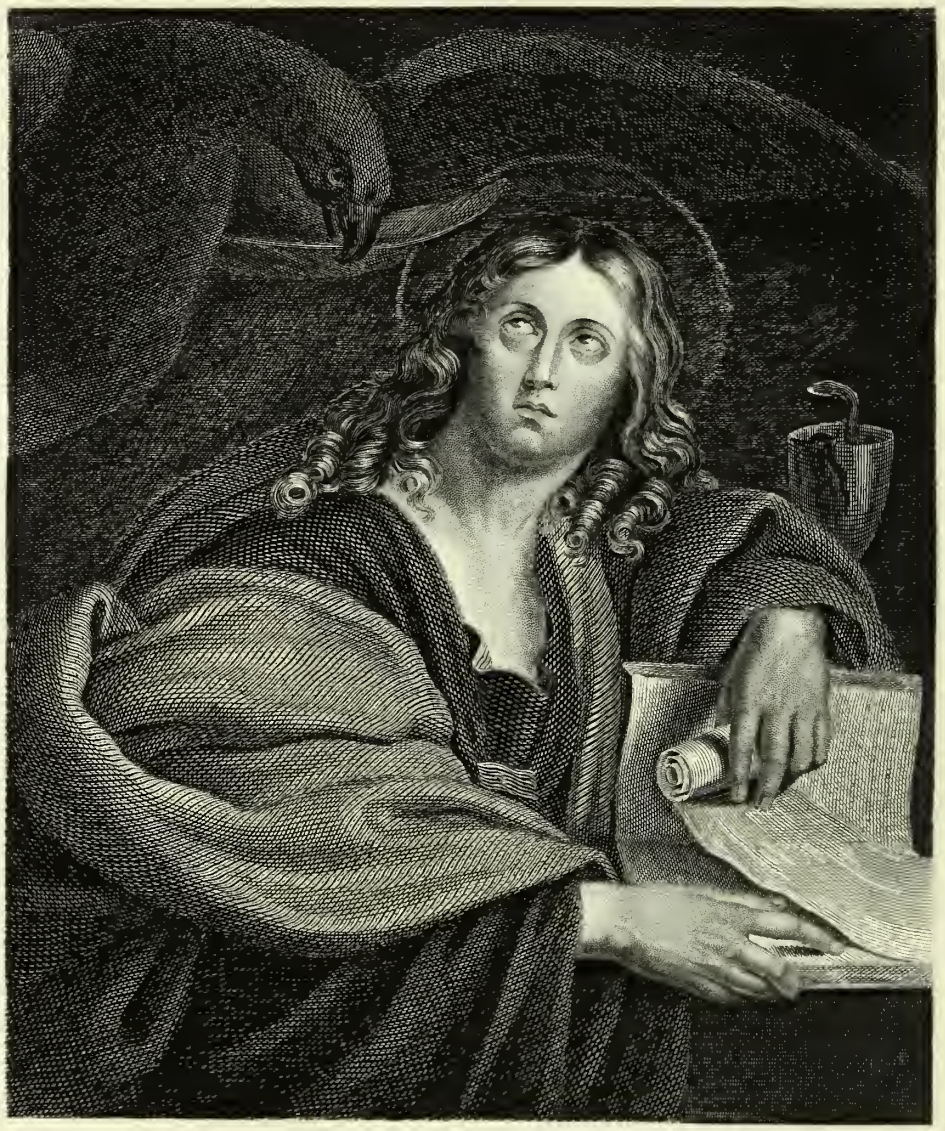
find it difficult to allow time sufficient for so tedious and difficult a voyage as that was in those early ages; and therefore it is safest to confine his ministry to Judea and the adjacent countries.

Herod, who was a bigot to the Jewish religion, as well as desirous of acquiring the favour of the Jews, began a violent persecution of the Christians, and the zeal by which he was animated induced him to pass sentence of death on this apostle. As he was led to the place of execution, the officer that guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuser, having been converted by the remarkable courage and constancy



Samaria—Remains of Herod's Colonnade, from the South-west.

shown by the apostle at the time of his trial, repented of what he had done, and fell down at the apostle's feet, heartily begging pardon for what he had said against him. The holy man, after recovering from the surprise, tenderly embraced him. "Peace," said he, "my son, peace be to thee, and the pardon of thy faults," upon which the officer publicly declared himself a Christian, and both were beheaded at the same time. Thus fell the great apostle St. James, the first of that number that gained the crown, taking cheerfully that cup of which he had long since told his Lord he was ready to drink.



St. John the Evangelist

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. John from his birth to the ascension of his great Lord and Master.

WE have already given an account of the descent of our evangelist, who was in all probability a follower of John the Baptist, and is thought to be that other disciple who, in the first chapter of his gospel, is said to have been present with Andrew when John declared Jesus to be "the Lamb of God," and thereupon to have followed him to the place of his abode.

He was by much the youngest of the apostles, yet he was admitted into as great a share of his Master's confidence as any of them. He was one of those to whom he communicated the most private passages of his life; one of those whom he took with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead; one of those to whom he exhibited a specimen of his Divinity in his transfiguration on the Mount; one of those who were present at his conference with Moses and Elias, and heard that voice which declared him the beloved Son of God; and one of those who were companions in his solitude, most retired devotions, and bitter agonies in the garden.

These instances of particular favour our apostle endeavoured, in some measure, to answer by returns of particular kindness and constancy; for though he at first deserted his Master on his apprehension, yet he soon recovered himself, and came back to seek his Saviour, confidently entered the high priest's hall, followed our Lord through the several particulars of his trial, and at last waited on him at his execution, owning him, as well as being owned by him, in the

midst of armed soldiers, and in the thickest crowds of his most inveterate enemies. Here it was that our great Redeemer committed to his care his sorrowful and disconsolate mother with his dying breath; and certainly the holy Jesus could not have given a more honourable testimony of his particular respect and kindness to St. John than by leaving his own mother to his trust and care, and substituting him to supply that duty he himself paid her while he resided in this vale of sorrow.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. John from the ascension of Christ to his death.

AFTER the ascension of the Saviour of the world, when the apostles made a division of the provinces among themselves, that of Asia fell to the share of St. John, though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem till the death of the blessed Virgin, which happened about fifteen years after our Lord's ascension. Being released from the trust committed to his care by his dying Master, he retired into Asia, and industriously applied himself to the propagation of Christianity, preaching where the gospel had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. Many churches of note and eminence were of his foundation, particularly those of Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and others; but his chief place of residence was at Ephesus, where St. Paul had, many years before, founded a church, and constituted Timothy bishop of it.

After spending several years at Ephesus, he was accused to Domitian, who had begun a persecution against the Christians, as an eminent assertor of atheism and impiety, and a public subverter of the religion of the empire; so that, by his command, the proconsul sent him bound to Rome, where he met with the treatment that might have been expected from so barbarous a prince, being thrown into a caldron of boiling oil. But the Almighty, who reserved him for further services in the vineyard of his Son, restrained the heat, as he did in the fiery furnace of old, and delivered him from this seemingly unavoidable destruction. And surely one would have thought that so miraculous a deliverance should have been sufficient to have persuaded any rational man that the religion he taught was from God, and that he was protected from danger by the hand of Omnipotence. But miracles themselves were not sufficient to convince this cruel emperor, or abate his fury. He ordered St. John to be transported to a disconsolate island in the Archipelago, called Patmos, where he continued several years, instructing the poor inhabitants in the knowledge of the Christian faith; and here, about the end of Domitian's reign, he wrote his Book of Revelation, exhibiting by visions and prophetical representations the state and condition

of Christianity in the future periods and ages of the church.

Upon the death of Domitian and the succession of Nerva, who repealed all the odious acts of his predecessor, and by public edicts recalled those whom the fury of Domitian had banished, St. John returned to Asia, and fixed his seat again at Ephesus, the rather because the people of that city had lately martyred Timothy, their bishop. Here, with the assistance of seven other bishops, he took upon himself the government of the large diocese of Asia Minor, and disposed of the clergy in the best manner that the circumstances of those times would permit, spending his time in an indefatigable execution of his charge, travelling from east to

west to instruct the world in the principles of the holy religion he was sent to propagate.

In this manner St. John continued to labour in the vineyard of his great Master till death put a period to all his toils and sufferings, which happened in the beginning of Trajan's reign, in the ninety-eighth year of his age, and he was, according to Eusebius, buried near Ephesus.

St. John seems always to have led a single life, though some of the ancients tell us he was a married man. He was polished by no study or arts of learning, but what was wanting from human art was abundantly supplied by the excellent constitution of

his mind, and that fulness of Divine grace with which he was adorned. His humility was admirable, studiously concealing his own honour, for in his epistles he never styles himself either apostle or evangelist; the title of presbyter, or elder, is all he assumes, and probably in regard to his age as much as his office. In his gospel, when he speaks of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he constantly conceals his own name, leaving the reader to discover whom he meant. Love and charity he practised himself, and affectionately pressed them upon others. The great love of his Saviour towards him seems to have inspired his soul with a larger and more generous charity than the rest. This is the great vein that runs through all his writings, especially his epistles, where he urges it as the great and peculiar law of Christianity, and without which all other pretences to the religion of the holy Jesus are vain and frivolous, useless and insignificant. And this was his constant practice to the very hour of his dissolution; for, when age and the decay of nature had rendered him so weak that he was unable to preach to the people any longer, he was constantly led, at every public meeting, to the church at Ephesus, and always repeated to them the same precept—"Little children, love one another;" and when his hearers, wearied with the constant repetition of the same thing, asked him why he never varied his discourse, he answered, Because to love one another is the command of our blessed Saviour, and he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him; but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. It is further added that this apostle, when stricken in years, would frequently confine his discourses to these words —"Little children, love one another."

The greatest instance of our apostle's care for the souls of men is the writings he left to posterity, the first of which in time, though placed last in the sacred canon, is his Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation, which he wrote during his banishment to the isle of Patmos.

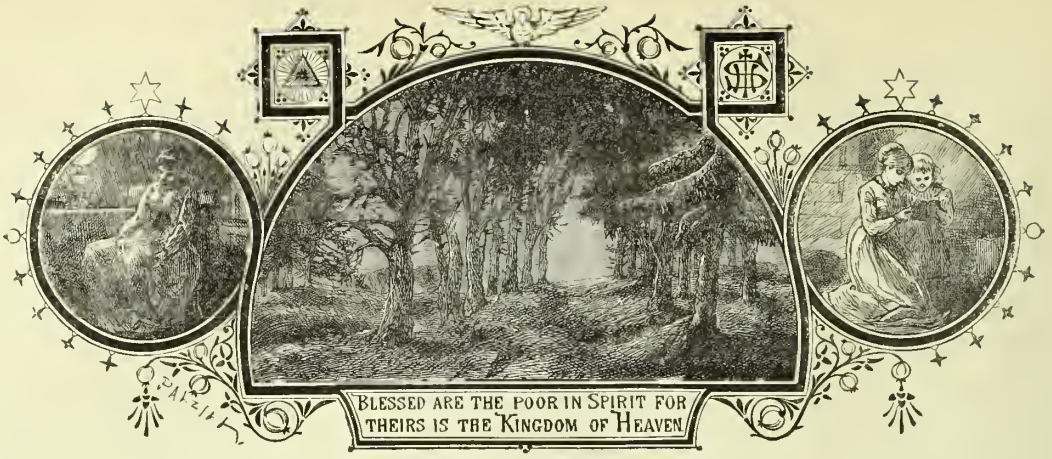
Next to the Apocalypse, in order of time, are his Three Epistles, the first of which is catholic, calculated for all times and places, containing the most excellent rules for the conduct of a Christian life, pressing to holiness and pureness of manners, and not to be satisfied with a naked and empty profession of religion, not to be led away with the crafty insinuations of seducers, and cautioning men against the poisonous principles and practices of the Gnostics. The apostle here, according to his usual modesty, conceals his name, it being of more consequence to a wise man what is said than he who says it. It appears from St. Augustine that this Epistle was anciently inscribed to the Parthians, because, in all probability,

St. John preached the gospel in Parthia. The other two Epistles are but short, and directed to particular persons; the one to a lady of great quality, the other to the charitable and hospitable Gaius, the kindest and the most courteous entertainer of all indigent Christians.

Before he undertook the task of writing his Gospel he caused a general fast to be kept by all the Asian churches, to implore the blessing of Heaven on so great and momentous an undertaking. When this was done he set about the work, and completed it in so excellent and sublime a manner that the ancients generally compared him to an eagle soaring aloft among the clouds, whither the weak eye of man was not able to follow him. "Among all the evangelical writers," says St. Basil, "none are like St. John, the son of thunder, for the sublimity of his speech and the height of his discourses, which are beyond any man's capacity fully to reach and comprehend." "St. John, as a true son of thunder," says Epiphanius, "by a loftiness of speech peculiar to himself, acquaints us, as it were, out of the clouds and dark recesses of wisdom, with the Divine doctrine of the Son of God."

Such is the character given of the writings of this great apostle and evangelist, who was honoured with the endearing title of being the beloved disciple of the Son of God—a writer so profound as to deserve, by way of eminence, the character of St. John the Divine.

The Cave cut out of the Rock.



ST. PHILIP.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Philip from his birth till the time of Christ's ascension.

THIS apostle was a native of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. He had the honour of being first called to be a disciple of the great Messiah, which happened in the following manner:—Our blessed Saviour, soon after his return from the wilderness where he had been tempted by the devil, met with Andrew and his brother Peter, and, after some discourse, parted from them. The next day, as he was passing through Galilee, he found Philip, whom he presently commanded to follow him—the constant form he made use of in calling his disciples, and those that inseparably attended him. So that the prerogative of being first called evidently belongs to St. Philip, he being the first of our Lord's disciples; for though St. Andrew and St. John were the first that came and conversed with the Saviour of the world, yet they immediately returned to their occupation, and were not called till a whole year after.

It cannot be doubted that notwithstanding St. Philip was a native of Galilee, yet he was excellently skilled in the law and the prophets. Metaphrastes assures us that he had, from his childhood, been excellently educated; that he frequently read over the books of Moses, and attentively considered the prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah.

Nor was our apostle idle after the honour he had received of being called to attend the Saviour of the world: he immediately imparted the glad tidings of the Messiah's appearance to his brother Nathanael, and conducted him to his beloved Master.

After his being called to the apos-

tolate we have very little recorded of him by the evangelists. It was, however, to him that our Saviour proposed the question, as to where they should find bread sufficient to satisfy the hunger of so great a multitude. Philip answered that it was not easy to procure so large a quantity, not considering that it was equally easy for Almighty Power to feed double the number, when it pleased to exert itself. It was also to the same apostle that the Gentile proselytes, who came up to worship at Jerusalem, applied when they were desirous to see the Saviour of the world; and it was with him our Lord had the discourse a little before the Paschal Supper, as recorded by the evangelist St. John.

The compassionate Jesus had been fortifying their minds with proper

The Wilderness.

considerations against his departure from them, and had told them that he was going to prepare for them a place in the mansions of the heavenly Canaan; that he was the way, the truth, and the life; that no man could come to the Father but by him; and that, knowing him, they both knew and had seen the Father. Philip, not thoroughly understanding the force of his Master's reasoning, begged of him that he would show them the Father. Our Lord gently reproved his ignorance, that, after attending so long to his instructions, he should not know that he was the image of his Father, the express character of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness appearing in him; that he said and did nothing but by his Father's appointment, of which, if they did not believe, his

miracles were a sufficient evidence; that such demands were, therefore, unnecessary and impertinent; and that it was an indication of great weakness in him, after three years' education under his discipline and institutions, to appear so ignorant with regard to these particulars.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Philip from the ascension of Christ to his martyrdom.

THE ancients tell us that, in the distribution made by the apostles of the several regions of the world, the Upper Asia fell to his share, where he laboured with an indefatigable

Philip baptizing the Eunuch.

diligence and industry. By the constancy and power of his preaching, and the efficacy of his miracles, he gained numerous converts, whom he baptized into the Christian faith, curing at once their bodies of infirmities and distempers, and their souls of error and idolatry. He continued

Philip Baptizing the Eunuch

with them a considerable time in settling churches, and appointing them guides and ministers of religion.

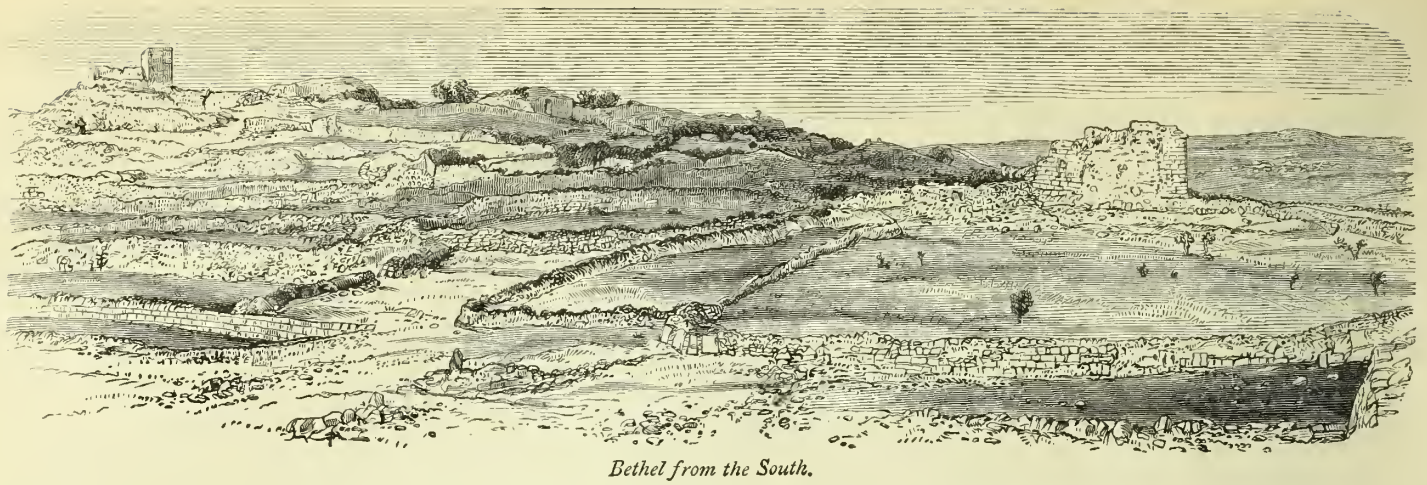
After several years successfully exercising his apostolical office in all those parts, he came at last to Hierapolis, in Phrygia, a city remarkably rich and populous, but, at the same time, overrun with the most enormous idolatry.

St. Philip, being grieved to see the people so wretchedly enslaved by error and superstition, continually offered his addresses to Heaven, till, by his prayers and often calling on the name of Christ, he procured the death, or at least the vanishing, of an enormous serpent to which they paid adoration.

Having thus demolished their deity, he demonstrated to them how ridiculous and unjust it was for them to pay Divine honours to such odious creatures; showed them that God alone was to be worshipped as the Great Parent of all the world, who in the beginning made man after his glorious image, and, when fallen from that innocent and happy state, sent his own Son into the world to redeem him; that, in order to perform this glorious work, he died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, and at the end of the world will come again to raise all the sons of men from the chambers of the dust, and sentence them to everlasting rewards and punishments. This discourse roused them from their lethargy; they were ashamed of their late idolatry, and great numbers embraced the doctrines of the gospel.

This provoked the great enemy of mankind, and he had recourse to his old methods—cruelty and persecution. The magistrates of the city seized the apostle, and, having thrown him into prison, caused him to be scourged. When this preparatory cruelty was over, he was led to execution, and, being bound, was hanged against a pillar; or, according to others, crucified. The apostle being dead, his body was taken down by St. Bartholomew, his fellow-labourer in the gospel, and Mariamne, St. Philip's sister, the constant companion of his travels, and decently buried, after which they confirmed the people in the faith of Christ, and departed from them.

The Marriage Feast.



Bethel from the South.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Bartholomew from his birth to the ascension of his great Master.

THIS apostle is mentioned amongst the twelve immediate disciples of our Lord under the appellation of Bartholomew, though it is evident, from divers passages of Scripture, that he was also called Nathanael. We shall, therefore, in our account of his life, consider the names of Nathanael and Bartholomew as belonging to one and the same person.

With regard to his descent and family, some are of opinion that he was a Syrian, and that he was descended from the Ptolemies of Egypt. But it is plain from the evangelical history that he was a Galilean, St. John having expressly told us that Nathanael was of Cana, in Galilee.

The Scripture is silent with regard to his trade and manner of life, though, from some circumstances, there is room to imagine that he was a fisherman. He was, at his first coming to Christ, conducted by Philip, who told him they had now found the long-expected Messiah, so often foretold by Moses and the prophets—"Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph;" and when he objected that the Messiah could not be born in Nazareth, Philip desired him to come and satisfy himself that he was the Messiah.

At his approach our blessed Saviour saluted him with this honourable character—that he was an Israelite indeed, a man of true simplicity and honesty; and his simplicity particularly appears in this—that when he was told of Jesus, he did not object against the meanness of his origin, the low condition of his parents, or the narrowness of their fortunes, but only against the place of his birth,

which, as he justly observed, could not be Nazareth, the Scriptures peremptorily foretelling that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem. By this, therefore, he appeared to be a true Israelite, one that waited for redemption in Israel, which, from the times mentioned in the Scripture predictions, he knew to be near at hand.

He was greatly surprised at our Lord's salutation, wondering how he could know him at first sight, thinking he had never before seen his face. But he was answered that he had seen him while he was yet under the fig-tree, even before Philip called him. Convinced by this instance of our Lord's Divinity, he presently made this confession—that he was now sure that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of God, whom he had appointed to govern his church. Our blessed Saviour told him that if, from this instance, he could believe him to be the Messiah, he should have far greater arguments to confirm his faith, for that he should hereafter behold the heavens opened to receive him, and the angels visibly appearing to attend his triumphant entrance into the heavenly Canaan.

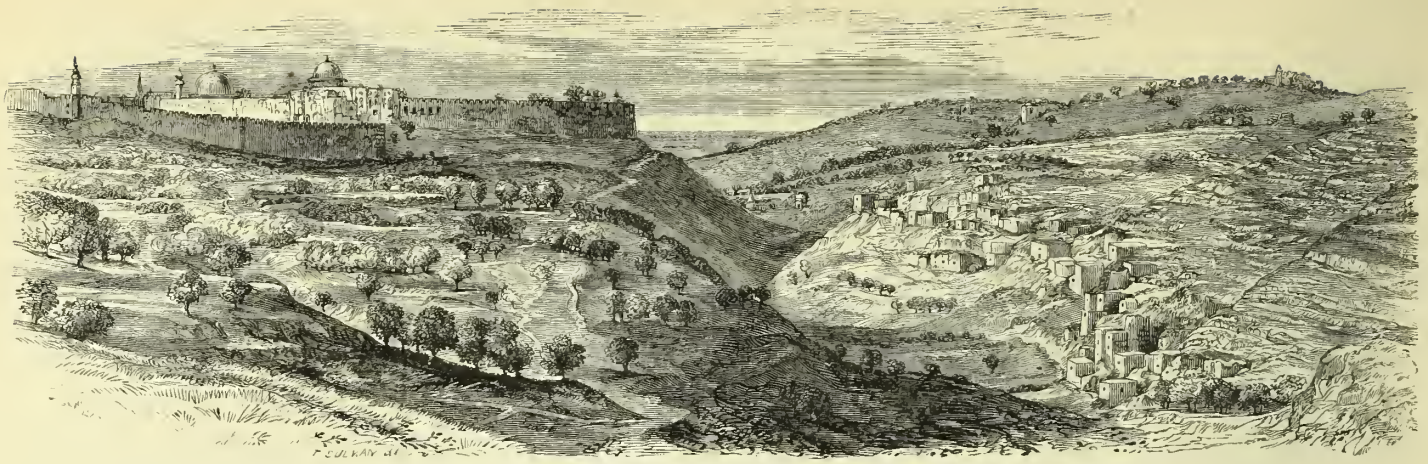
CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Bartholomew from the ascension of Christ to his martyrdom.

OUR apostle, having his peculiar spot allotted him for the promulgation of the gospel of his blessed Master, (who had now ascended into heaven, and sent his Holy Spirit to fit and qualify his disciples for the important work,) visited different parts of the world to preach the gospel, and penetrated as far as the hither India.

Whence, after spending a considerable time in India and the eastern extremities of Asia, he returned to the northern and western parts, and we find him at Hierapolis, in Phrygia, labouring, in concert with St. Philip, to plant Christianity in those parts, and to convince the blind idolaters of the evil of their ways, and direct them in the paths that lead to eternal salvation. This enraged the bigoted magistrates, and he was, together with St. Philip, designed for martyrdom, and, in order to this, fastened to a cross; but their consciences pricking them for a time, they took him immediately down from the cross, and set him at liberty.

From hence he retired into Lycaonia, and St. Chrysostom assures us that he instructed and trained up the inhabitants in the Christian discipline. His last remove was to Albanople, in Great Armenia, a place miserably overrun with idolatry, from which he laboured to reclaim the people. But his endeavour to "turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God," was so far from having the desired effect, that it provoked the magistrates, who prevailed on the governor to put him to death, which he cheerfully underwent, sealing the truth of the doctrine he had preached with his blood.



Jerusalem—Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives, with the Kidron Valley, Siloam, and Mount of Corruption, from the South.

ST. MATTHEW.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Matthew from his birth to the ascension of Christ.

ST. MATTHEW, called also Levi, though a Roman officer, was a true Hebrew, and probably a Galilean: his trade was that of a publican, or tax-gatherer to the Romans, an office detested by the generality of the Jews on two accounts: first, because, having farmed the custom of the Romans, they used every method of oppression to pay their rents to them; secondly, because they demanded tribute of the Jews, who considered themselves as a free people, having received that privilege from God himself. And hence they had a common proverb among them: "Take not a wife out of that family in which there is a publican, for they are all publicans;" that is, they are all thieves, robbers, and notorious sinners. And to this proverbial custom our blessed Saviour alludes, when speaking of a hardened sinner, on whom neither private reproofs nor the public censures and admonitions of the church can prevail, "Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Our blessed Saviour, having cured a person long afflicted with the palsy, retired out of Capernaum, to walk by the seaside, where he taught the people that flocked after him.

Here he saw Matthew sitting in his office, and called him to follow him. The man was rich, had a large and profitable employment, was a wise and prudent person, and doubtless understood what it would cost him to comply with the call of Jesus. He was not ignorant that he must ex-

change wealth for poverty, a custom-house for a prison, rich and powerful masters for a naked and despised Saviour. But he overlooked all these considerations, left all his interest and relations to become our Lord's disciple, and to embrace a more spiritual way of commerce and traffic.

Christ healing the Sick.

The Pharisees, who sought all opportunities of raising objections against the doctrine of the blessed Jesus, took this opportunity of suggesting to his disciples that it was highly unbecoming so pure and holy

Christ driving the Money-changers from the Temple.

a person as their Master pretended himself to be to converse so familiarly with the worst of men, with publicans and sinners—persons infamous to a proverb. But he presently replied to them that these were the sick, and therefore needed the physician; that his company was of most consequence where the souls of men most required it; that God himself preferred works of mercy and charity, especially in doing good to the souls of men, infinitely above all ritual observances; and that the principal design of his coming into the world was not to call the righteous, or those who, like themselves, vainly pretend to be so, but sinners, humble, self-convinced sinners, to repentance.

After St. Matthew's election to the apostolate, he continued with the rest till the ascension of his great and beloved Master; but the evangelical writers have recorded nothing particular concerning him during this period.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Matthew from the ascension of Christ to his martyrdom.

AFTER our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven, St. Matthew, for the first eight years at least, preached in different parts of Judea; but afterwards he left the country of Palestine to convert the Gentile world. Before his departure he was entreated by the Jewish converts to write the history of the life and actions of the blessed Jesus, and leave it among them as a standing monument of what he had so often delivered to them in his sermons. This he readily complied with, as we shall more particularly mention in giving an account of his Gospel.

After his leaving Judea he travelled into several parts, especially Ethiopia, but the particular places he visited

are not known with any certainty. However, after labouring indefatigably in the vineyard of his Master, he suffered martyrdom at a city of Ethiopia called Naddabar; but by what kind of death is not absolutely known, though the general opinion is that he was slain with a halberd.

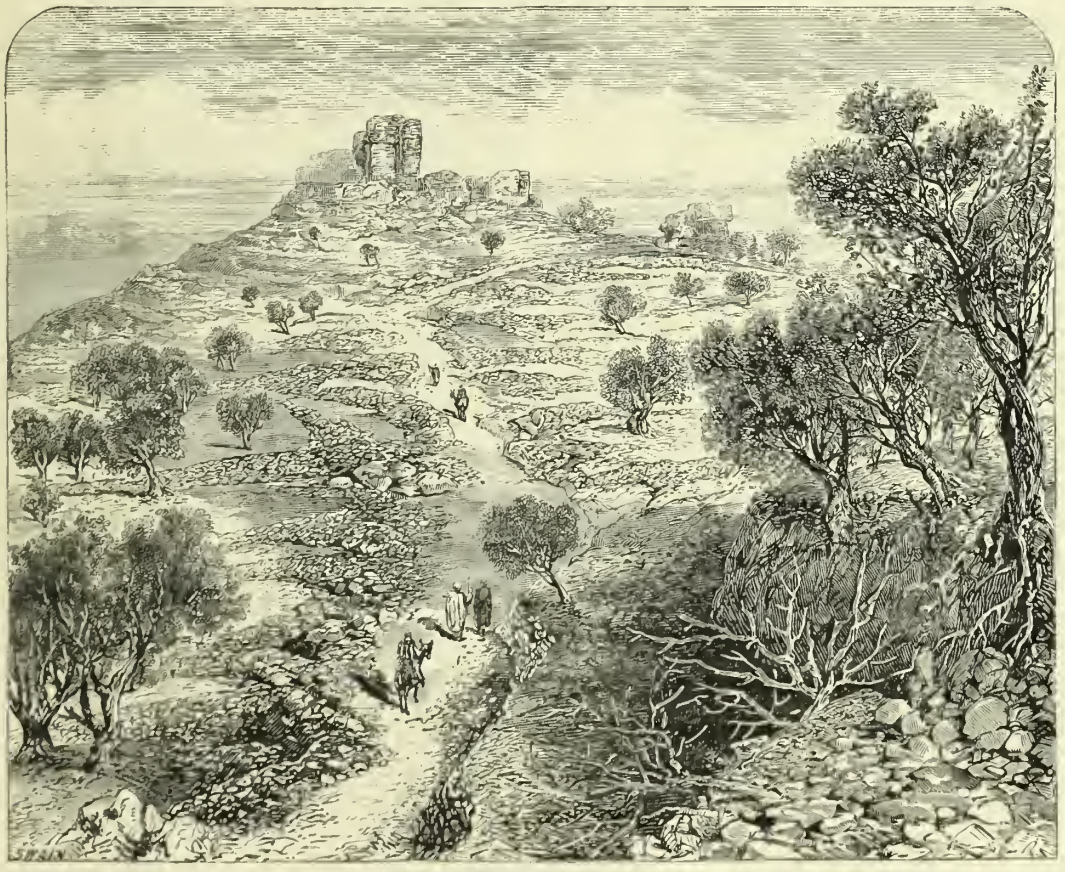
St. Matthew was a remarkable instance of the power of religion in bringing men to a better temper of mind. If we reflect upon his circumstances while he continued a stranger to the great Redeemer of mankind, we shall find that the love of the world had possessed his heart. But, notwithstanding this, no sooner did Christ call him than he abandoned, without the least scruple or hesitation, all his riches; nay, he not only renounced his lucrative trade, but ran the greatest hazard of displeasing the masters who employed him, for quitting their service without giving them the least notice, and leaving his accounts in confusion. Had our blessed Saviour appeared as a secular prince, clothed with temporal power and authority, it would have been no wonder for him to have gone over to his service; but when he appeared under all the circumstances of meanness and disgrace, when he seemed to promise his followers nothing but misery and sufferings in this life, and to propose no other rewards than the invisible encouragements of another world, his change appears truly wonderful and surprising; but Divine grace can subdue all opposition.

His contempt of the world appeared in his exemplary temperance and abstemiousness from all delights and pleasures; nay, even from the ordinary conveniences and accommodations of it. He was mean and modest in his own opinion, always preferring others to himself; for whereas the other evangelists, in describing the apostles by pairs, constantly place him before St. Thomas, he modestly places him before himself. The rest of the evangelists are careful to mention the honour of his apostleship, but speak of his former sordid, dishonest, and disgraceful course of life only under the name of Levi; while he himself sets it down, with all its circumstances, under his own proper and common name: a conduct which at once commends the prudence and candour of the apostle, and suggests to us this useful reflection—that the greatest sinners are not excluded from Divine grace, nor can any, if penitent, have just reason to despair, when publicans and sinners find mercy at the throne of grace.

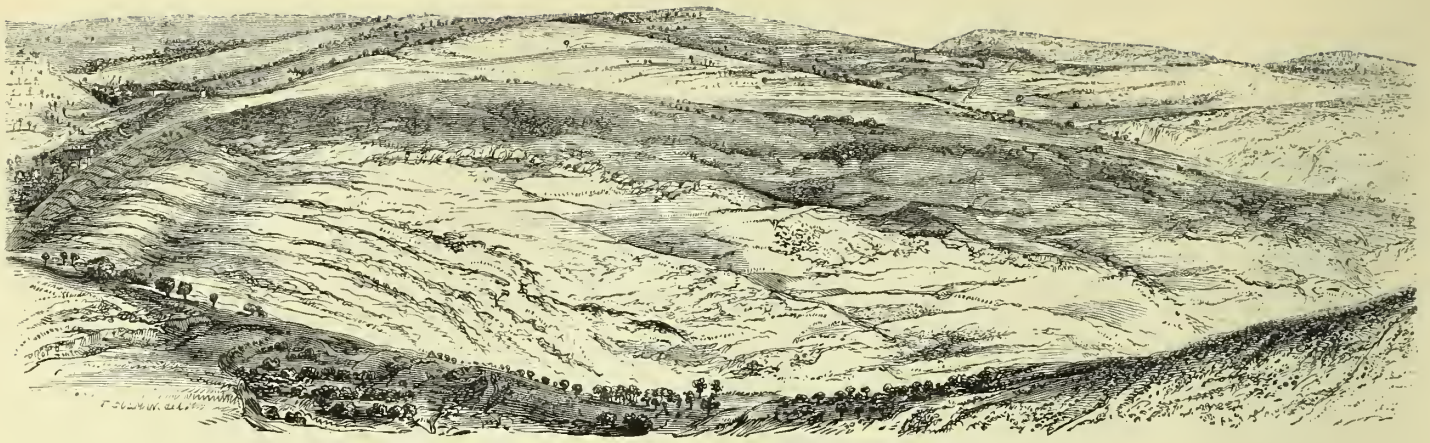
The last thing we shall remark in the life of this apostle is his Gospel, written at the entreaty of the Jewish converts while he abode in Palestine, but at what time is uncertain; some believe it to have been written eight, some fifteen, and some thirty years after our Lord's ascension. It was originally written in Hebrew, but soon after translated into Greek by one of the disciples.

After the Greek translation was

admitted, the Hebrew copy was chiefly owned and used by the Nazaræi, a middle sect between Jews and Christians: with the former, they adhered to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, and with the latter they believed in Christ, and embraced his religion; and hence this Gospel has been styled, "The Gospel according to the Hebrews," and "The Gospel of the Nazarenes."



A terraced Slope in Palestine.



Country between Jerusalem and Bethany, showing the three summits of the Mount of Olives.

ST. THOMAS.

CHAPTER I.

The transactions of St. Thomas from his birth to the ascension of the blessed Saviour.

FROM evangelical history nothing can be gleaned with regard either to the country or kindred of St. Thomas. It is, however, certain that he was a Jew, and in all probability a Galilean.

He was, together with the rest, called to the apostleship, and not long after gave an eminent instance of his being ready to undergo the most melancholy fate that might attend him; for when the rest of the apostles dissuaded their Master from going into Judea at the time of Lazarus's death, because the Jews lately endeavoured to stone him, Thomas desired them not to hinder his journey thither, though it might cost them all their lives. "Let us also go," said he, "that we may die with him," concluding that, instead of Lazarus being raised from the dead, they should all, like him, be placed in the chambers of the dust.

When the holy Jesus, a little before his sufferings, had been speaking to them of the joys of heaven, and had told them that he was going to prepare mansions for them, that they might follow him, and that they knew both the place whither he was going, and the way thither, our apostle replied that they knew not whither he was going, much less the way that would lead them thither, to which our Lord returned this short but satisfactory answer: "I am the way." I am the person whom the Father hath sent into the world to show mankind the paths that lead to eternal life, and therefore you cannot miss the way if you follow my example.

After the disciples had seen their great Master expire on the cross, their minds were distracted by hopes and fears concerning his resurrection, about which they were not then fully satisfied, which engaged him the sooner to hasten his appearance, that, by the sensible manifestations of himself, he might put the matter beyond all possibility of dispute. Accordingly, the very day in which he arose from the dead, he came into the house where they were assembled, while, for fear of the Jews, the doors about them were close shut, and gave them sufficient assurance that he was risen from the dead. At this meeting Thomas was absent, having probably never rejoined their company since their dispersion in the garden, when every one's fears prompted him to consult his own safety. At his return they told him that the Lord had appeared to them, but he obstinately refused to give credit to what they said, or to believe that it was really he, presuming it rather to have been a spectre or apparition, unless he might see the very print of the nails, and feel the wounds in his hands and side.

But our compassionate Saviour would not take the advantage of his perverse obstinacy, but on that day sevennight came again to them as they were solemnly met at their devotions, and, calling to Thomas, bade him look upon his hands, put his fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust his hands into his side, to satisfy his faith by a demonstration from the senses. Thomas was soon convinced of his error and obstinacy, confessing that he now acknowledged him to be his Lord and Master, saying, "My Lord and my God." Our Lord answered that it was happy for him that he believed the testimony of his own senses, but that it would have been more commendable in him to have believed without seeing, because it was foretold that the Son of God should burst the chains of death, and rise again from the dead.

CHAPTER II.

The transactions of St. Thomas from the ascension of the Son of God to his death.

OUR great Redeemer having, according to promise before his ascension, poured an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples, to qualify them for the great work of preaching the gospel, St. Thomas, as well as the rest, laboured in the cause of his Divine Master in several parts of Judea; and, after the dispersion of the Christian church in Jerusalem, repaired into Parthia, the province assigned him for his ministry, after which, as Sempronius and others inform us, he preached the gospel to the Medes, Persians, Carminians, Hyrcani, Bactrians, and the neighbouring nations. During his preaching in Persia he is said to have met with the magi, or wise men, who had taken that long journey at our Saviour's birth to worship him, whom he baptized, and took with him as his companions and assistants in propagating the gospel.

Leaving Persia, he travelled into Ethiopia, preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, healing the sick, and working other miracles, to prove he had his commission from on high; and, after travelling through these countries, he entered India.

When the Portuguese first visited these countries, after their discovery of a passage by the Cape of Good Hope, they received the following particulars, partly from ancient monuments, and partly from constant and uncontroverted traditions preserved by the Christians in those parts; namely, that St. Thomas came first to Socotara, an island in the Arabian Sea, and thence to Cranganore, where, having converted many from the error of their ways, he travelled further into the East; and, having successfully preached the gospel, returned back to the kingdom of Coromandel, where at Meliapur, the metropolis of the kingdom, not far from the mouth of the Ganges, he began to erect a place for Divine worship, till prohibited by the idolatrous priests and Sagamo, prince of that country. But, after performing several miracles, the work was suffered to proceed, and Sagamo himself embraced the Christian faith, whose example was soon followed by great numbers of his friends and subjects.

This remarkable success alarmed the Brahmins, who plainly perceived that their religion would be soon extirpated, unless some method could be found of putting a stop to the progress of Christianity, and therefore resolved to put the apostle to death. At a small distance from the city was a tomb, whither St. Thomas often retired for private devotion. Hither the Brahmins and their armed followers pursued him, and, while he was at prayer, they first shot at him a shower of darts, after which one of the priests ran him through with a lance.

His body was taken up by his disciples, and buried in the church he had lately erected, and which was afterwards improved into a fabric of great magnificence.

St. Chrysostom says that St. Thomas, who at first was the weakest and most incredulous of all the apostles, became, through Christ's condescension to satisfy his scruples and the power of the Divine grace, the most active and invincible of them all, travelling over most parts of the world, and living without fear in the midst of barbarous nations, through the efficacy of that Almighty Power which can make the weakest vessels to perform acts of the greatest difficulty and moment.

Panoramic View of the Temple Area from Mount Zion.

ST. JAMES THE LESS.

IT has been doubted by some whether this was the same with that St. James who was afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, two of this name being mentioned in the sacred writings, namely, St. James the Great and St. James the Less, both apostles. The ancients mention a third, surnamed the Just, which they will have to be distinct from the former, and bishop of Jerusalem. But this opinion is built on a sandy foundation, for nothing is plainer than that St. James the apostle, whom St. Paul calls our Lord's brother, and reckons, with Peter and John, one of the pillars of the church, was the same who presided among the apostles, doubtless by virtue of his episcopal office, and determined the causes in the synod of Jerusalem. It is reasonable to think that he was the son of Joseph, afterwards the husband of Mary, by his first wife, whom St. Jerome styles Escha, and adds that she was the daughter of Aggi, brother to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Hence he was reputed our Lord's brother. We find, indeed, several mentioned as the brethren of our Saviour in the evangelical history, but in what sense was greatly controverted by the ancients. St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, and some others will have them to be so called from their being the sons of Mary, cousin-german, or, according to the Hebrew idiom, sister to the Virgin Mary. But Eusebius, Epiphanius, and many others tell us they were the children of Joseph by a former wife. And this seems most natural, and best agrees with what the evangelists say of them, when they enumerate the questions of the Jews: "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James,

and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" From hence it is plain that the Jews understood these persons not to be Christ's kinsmen only, but his brethren, the same carpenter's sons, having the same relation to him that Jesus himself had. With regard to the place of his birth the sacred history is silent.

After the resurrection he was honoured with a particular appearance of our Lord to him, which, though passed over in silence by the evangelists, is recorded by St. Paul.

Some time after this appearance, he was chosen bishop of Jerusalem, preferred before all the rest for his near relation to Christ; and for the same reason we find Simon chosen to be his immediate successor in that see, because, after St. James, he was our Lord's next kinsman—a consideration that made Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, though they had been particularly honoured by our Saviour, not to contend for this high and honourable station, but freely to choose James the Just bishop of Jerusalem.

When St. Paul came to Jerusalem after his conversion, he applied to St. James, and was by him honoured with the right hand of fellowship. And it was to St. James that Peter sent the news of his miraculous deliverance out of prison. "Go," said he, "show these things unto James, and to the brethren;" that is, to the whole church, especially to St. James, the pastor of it.

He performed every part of his duty with all possible care and industry, omitting no particular necessary to be observed by a diligent and faithful guide of souls, strengthening the weak, instructing the ignorant, reducing the erroneous, reproving the obstinate, and, by the constancy of his sermons, conquering the stubbornness of that perverse and refractory generation he had to deal with, many of the nobler and better sort being persuaded to embrace the Christian faith.

But a person so careful, so successful in his charge, could not fail of awakening the spite and malice of his enemies—a sort of men of whom the apostle has given too true a character, that "they please not God, and are contrary to all men." They were vexed to see St. Paul had escaped their hands by appealing unto Cæsar, and therefore turned their fury against St. James; but, being unable to effect their design under the government of Festus, they determined to attempt it under the procuratorship of Albinus, his successor—Ananus the younger, of the sect of the Sadducees, being high priest.

In order to this a council was summoned, and the apostle, with others, arraigned and condemned as violators of the law. But, that the action might appear more plausible and popular, the scribes and Pharisees, masters in the art of dissimulation, endeavoured to ensnare him; and, at

their first coming, told him that they had all placed the greatest confidence in him; that the whole nation, as well as they, gave him the title of a just man, and one that was no respecter of persons; that they therefore desired he would correct the error and false opinion the people had conceived of Jesus, whom they considered as the Messiah, and take this opportunity of the universal confluence to the paschal solemnity to set them right in their opinions in this particular, and would go with them to the top of the temple, where he might be seen and heard by all.

The apostle readily consented, and, being advantageously placed on a pinnacle of the temple, they addressed him in the following manner:—"Tell us, O Justus, for we have all the reason in the world to believe that the people are thus generally led away with the doctrine of Jesus, who was crucified; tell us, what is this institution of the crucified Jesus?" to which the apostle answered, with an audible voice, "Why do you inquire of Jesus, the Son of man? He sits in heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and will come again in the clouds of heaven." The people below, hearing this, glorified the blessed Jesus, and openly proclaimed, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The scribes and Pharisees now perceived that they had acted foolishly; that, instead of reclaiming, they had confirmed the people in their error; and that there was no way left but to dispatch him immediately, in order to warn others, by his sufferings, not to believe in Jesus of Nazareth. Accordingly, they suddenly cried out that Justus himself was seduced and become an impostor, and immediately threw him from the pinnacle on which he stood into the court below; but, not being killed on the spot, he recovered himself so far as to rise on his knees, and pray fervently to heaven for his murderers. But malice is too diabolical to be pacified with kindness, or satisfied with cruelty. Accordingly, his enemies, vexed that they had not fully accomplished their work, poured a shower of stones upon him while he was imploring their forgiveness at the throne of grace; and one of them, more merciful than the rest, put an end to his misery with a fuller's club.

Thus did this great and good man finish his course in the ninety-sixth year of his age, and about twenty-four years after our blessed Saviour's ascension into heaven. His death was lamented by all good men, even by the sober and just persons among the Jews themselves, as Josephus himself confesses.

He was a man of exemplary piety and devotion, educated under the strictest rules and institutions of religion. Prayer was his constant business and delight; he seemed to live upon it, and to have continually his conversation in heaven; and he who has told us "that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much," found it so by his own experience, Heaven lending a more immediate ear to his

petitions; so that in a time of remarkable drought, on his praying for rain, the clouds melted into fruitful showers.

Nor was his charity towards men less than his piety towards God; he did good to all, watched over the souls of men, and studied to advance their eternal welfare.

He was of a remarkably meek and humble temper, honouring what was excellent in others, concealing what was valuable in himself; neither the eminence of his relation to the blessed Jesus, nor the dignity of the place he so worthily filled, could induce him to entertain lofty thoughts of himself above the rest of his brethren; on the contrary, he strove to conceal whatever might place him in a higher rank than the other disciples of the Lord of glory. Though he was brother to the Redeemer of mankind, he styles himself only "the servant of our Lord Jesus Christ," not so much as mentioning his being an apostle.

His temperance was admirable, wholly abstaining from flesh, and drinking neither wine nor strong drink. He lived, indeed, after the strictest rules of the Nazarite order; and as the mitre he wore on his head evinced his priesthood, which was rather from Melchizedek than Aaron, so his never shaving his head or using any ointment, his habit and diet, and the great severity of his life showed him to belong to the Nazarite institution, to which he was consecrated even from his mother's womb —a man of so divine a temper that he was at once the love and wonder of his age, and, from the reputation of his holy and religious life, was styled James the Just.

He wrote only one Epistle, probably not long before his martyrdom, as appears from some passages in it relating to the near approach of the destruction of the Jews. He directed it to the Jewish converts dispersed up and down those eastern countries, to comfort them under their sufferings, and confirm them against error. He saw a great degeneration and declension of manners coming on, and that the purity of the Christian faith began to be undermined by the doctrines and practices of the Gnostics, who, under pretence of zeal for the legal rites, generally mixed themselves with the Jews. He beheld libertinism flowing in apace, and the way to heaven made soft and easy, men declaiming against good works as useless and unnecessary, and wresting the Scriptures to subserve the purposes of their lust and corrupt affections. Our apostle, therefore, recommends that faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and brings forth obedience to the will of Heaven, as the only faith acceptable in the sight of a pure and holy God.

ST. SIMON THE ZEALOT.

ST. SIMON, in the catalogue of the apostles, is styled Simon the Canaanite, whence some conjecture he was born in Cana of Galilee, and others will have him to have been the bridegroom mentioned by St. John, at whose marriage our blessed Saviour turned the water into wine. But this word has no relation to his country, or the place of his nativity, being derived from the Hebrew word *knah*, which signifies zeal, and denotes a warm and sprightly temper. What some of the evangelists, therefore, call Canaanite, others, rendering the Hebrew by the Greek word, style Zealot: not from his great zeal, his ardent affection to his Master, and his desire of advancing his religion in the world, but from his warm active temper, and zealous forwardness in some particular sect of religion before his coming to our Saviour.

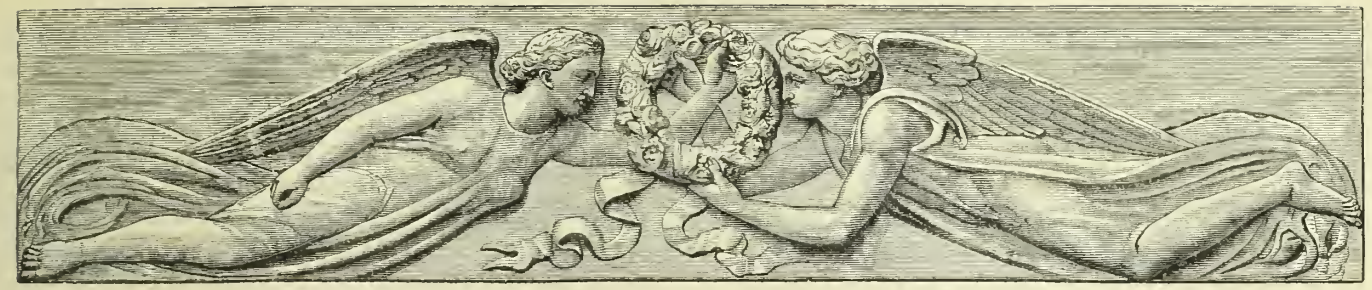
In order to understand this the better, it will be necessary to observe that as there were several sects and parties among the Jews, so there was one, either a distinct sect, or at least a branch of the Pharisees, called the sect of the Zealots. This sect of the Zealots took upon them to execute punishments in extraordinary cases; and that not only by the connivance, but with the leave both of the rulers and the people, till, in process of time, their zeal degenerated into all kinds of licentiousness and wild extravagance, and they not only became the pests of the commonwealth at home, but opened the doors for the Romans to break in upon them, to their final and irrevocable ruin. They were continually prompting the people to throw off the Roman yoke and assert their natural liberty, taking care, when they had thrown all things into confusion, to make their own advantage of the tumult. Josephus gives a large account of them,

and everywhere bewails them as the great plague of the nation.

Many attempts were made, especially by Annas, the high priest, to reduce them to order, and oblige them to observe the rules of sobriety, but all were in vain: they continued their violent proceedings, and, joining with the Idumeans, committed every kind of outrage. They broke into the sanctuary, slew the priests themselves before the altar, and filled the streets of Jerusalem with tumults, rapine, and blood. Nay, when Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Roman army, they continued their detestable proceedings, creating fresh tumults and factions, and were indeed the principal cause of the ill success of the Jews in that fatal war.

This is a true account of the sect of the Zealots, though, whatever St. Simon was before, we have no reason to suspect but that after his conversion he was very zealous for the honour of his Master, and considered all those who were enemies to Christ as enemies to himself, however near they might be to him in any natural relation. And as he was very exact in all the practical duties of the Christian religion, so he showed a very serious and pious indignation towards those who professed religion and a faith in Christ with their mouths, but dishonoured their sacred profession by their irregular and vicious lives, as many of the first professing Christians really did.

St. Simon continued in communion with the rest of the apostles and disciples at Jerusalem; and at the feast of Pentecost received the same miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, so that he was qualified, with the rest of the brethren, for the apostolic office; and, in propagating the gospel of the Son of God, we cannot doubt of his exercising his gifts with the same zeal and fidelity, though in what part of the world is uncertain. Some say he went into Egypt, Cyrene, and Africa, preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of those remote and barbarous countries; and others add that, after he had passed through those burning wastes, he took ship and visited the frozen regions of the north, preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of the western parts, and even in Britain, where, having converted great multitudes, sustained the greatest hardships and persecutions, he was at last crucified, and buried in some part of Great Britain, but where is unknown.



ST. JUDE.

THIS apostle is mentioned by three several names in the evangelical history, namely, Jude, or Judas, Thaddæus, and Lebbæus. He was brother to St. James the Less, afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, being the son of Joseph, the reputed father of Christ, by a former wife. It is not known when, or by what means, he became a disciple of our blessed Saviour, nothing being said of him till we find him in the catalogue of the twelve apostles; nor afterwards, till Christ's last supper, when, discoursing with them about his departure, and comforting them with a promise that he would return to them again, meaning after his resurrection, though the world should see him no more, our apostle said to his Master, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?

Paulinus tells us that the province which fell to the share of St. Jude was Libya, but he does not tell us whether it was the Cyrenean Libya, which is thought to have received the gospel from St. Mark, or the more southern parts of Africa. But, however that be, in his first setting out to preach the gospel he travelled up and down Judea and Galilee; then through Samaria into Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia and the neighbouring countries, and afterwards to Syria and Mesopotamia. Nicephorus adds that he came at last to Edessa, where Abagarus governed, and where Thaddæus, one of the seventy, had already sown the seeds of the gospel. Here he perfected what the other had begun; and having, by his sermons and miracles, established the religion of Jesus, he died in peace; but others say that he was slain at Berytus, and honourably buried there. The writers of the Latin church are unanimous in declaring that he travelled into Persia, where, after great success in his apostolical ministry for many years, he was at last, for his free and

open reproving the superstitious rites and customs of the magi, cruelly put to death.

St. Jude left only one Epistle, which is placed the last of those seven styled catholic in the sacred canon. It hath no particular inscription, as the other six have, but is thought to have been primarily intended for the Christian Jews in their several dispersions, as St. Peter's Epistles were. In it he tells them that he at first intended to write to them in general of the common salvation, and establish and confirm them in it; but, seeing the doctrine of Christ attacked on every side by heretics, he conceived it more necessary to spend his time in exhorting them to fight manfully in defence of the faith once delivered to the saints, and oppose the false teachers who laboured so indefatigably to corrupt it.

It was some time before this Epistle was generally received in the church. The author, indeed, like St. James, St. John, and sometimes St. Paul himself, does not call himself an apostle, styling himself only the servant of Christ. But he has added what is equivalent, "Jude, the brother of James," a character that can belong to no other but our apostle. And surely the humility of a follower of Jesus should be no objection against his writings.

ST. MATTHIAS.

AS Matthias was not an apostle of the first election, immediately called and chosen of the Son of God himself, it cannot be expected that any account of him can be found in the evangelical history. He was one of our Lord's disciples, probably one of the seventy, that had attended on him the whole time of his public ministry, and after his death was elected into the apostolate, to supply the place of Judas, who, after betraying his great Lord and Master, laid violent hands on himself.

The defection of Judas having made a vacancy in the apostolic college, the first thing they did after their return from Mount Olivet, when their great Master ascended to the throne of his glory, was to fill up this vacancy with a proper person.

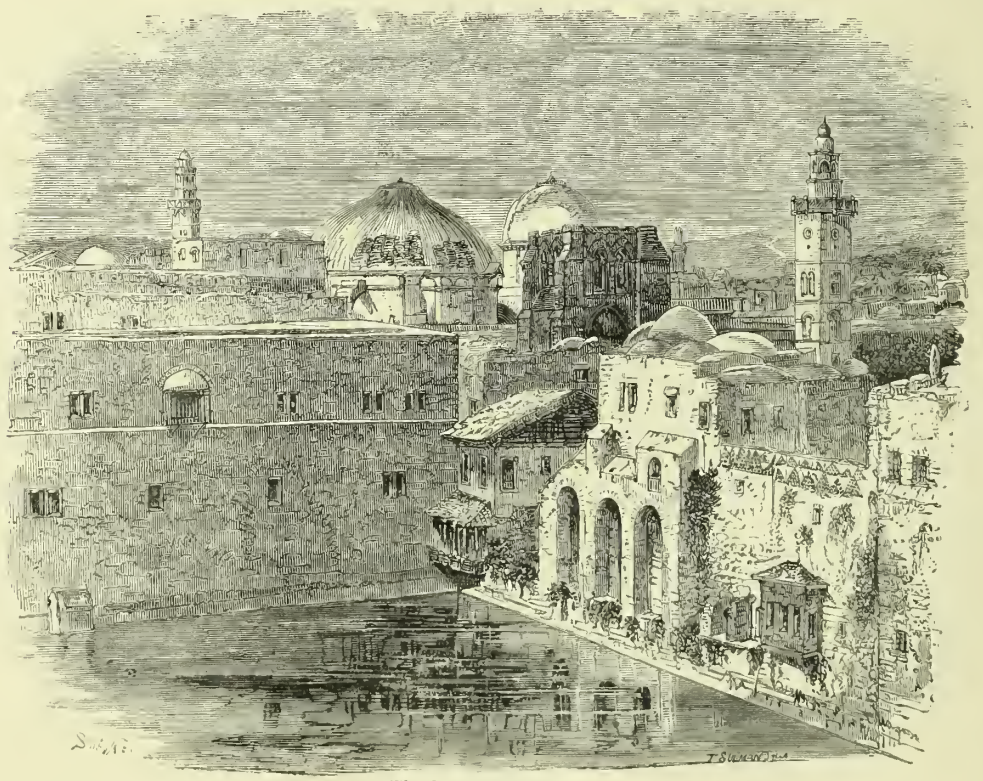
Accordingly, two persons were proposed—Joseph, called Barsabas, and Matthias—both duly qualified for the important office. The method of election was by lots, a way common both among the Jews and Gentiles for determining doubtful and difficult cases, especially in choosing judges or magistrates. And this course seems to have been taken by the apostles because the Holy Ghost was not yet given, by whose immediate dictates and inspirations they were afterwards chiefly guided. The prayer being ended, the lots were drawn, by which it appeared that Matthias was the person, and he was accordingly numbered among the twelve apostles.

Not long after this election the promised powers of the Holy Ghost were conferred upon the apostles, to qualify them for that great and difficult employment upon which they were sent—the establishing the holy religion of the Son of God among the children of men.

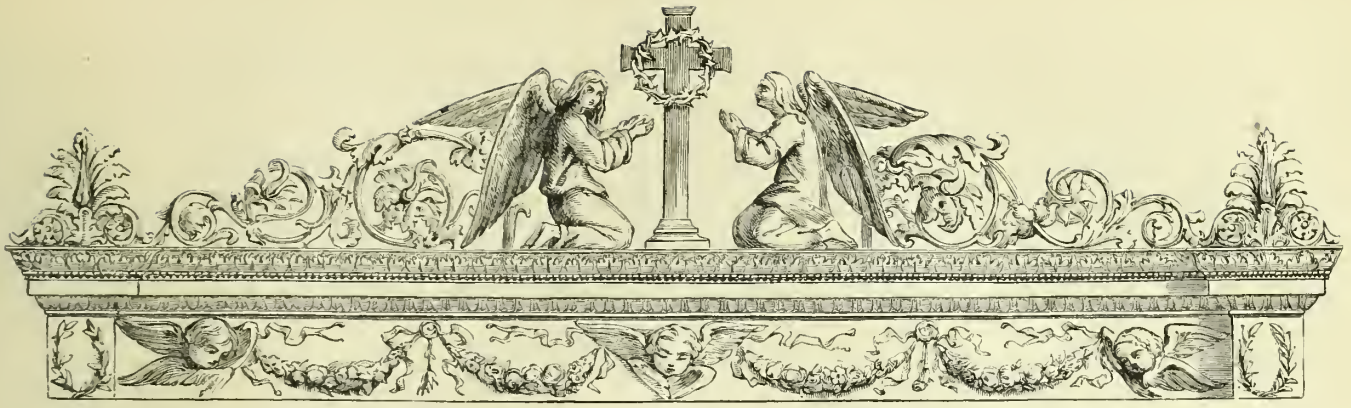
St. Matthias spent the first year of his ministry in Judea, where he reaped a very considerable harvest of

souls, and then travelled into different parts of the world, to publish the glad tidings of salvation to people who had never yet heard of a Saviour; but the particular parts he visited are not certainly known.

It is uncertain by what kind of death he left the regions of mortality, and sealed the truth of the gospel he had so assiduously preached with his blood. Dorotheus says he finished his course at Sebastopol, and was buried there near the Temple of the Sun. An ancient martyrology reports him to have been seized by the Jews, and, as a blasphemer, to have been stoned, and then beheaded; but the Greek offices, supported herein by the authority of several ancient breviaries, tell us that he was crucified.



The Pool of Hezekiah.



ST. MARK.

ST. MARK was descended from Jewish parents, and of the tribe of Levi. Nor was it uncommon among the Jews to change their names on some remarkable revolution or accident of life, or when they intended to travel into any of the European provinces of the Roman empire.

The ancients generally considered him as one of the seventy disciples; and Epiphanius expressly tells us that he was one of those who, taking exception at our Lord's discourse of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, "went back, and walked no more with him." But there appears no manner of foundation for these opinions, nor, likewise, for that of Nicephorus, who will have him to be the son of St. Peter's sister.

Eusebius tells us that St. Mark was sent into Egypt by St. Peter to preach the gospel, and accordingly planted a church in Alexandria, the metropolis of it; and his success was so very remarkable, that he converted multitudes, both of men and women, persuading them not only to embrace the Christian religion, but also a life of more than ordinary strictness.

St. Mark did not confine himself to Alexandria and the oriental parts of Egypt, but removed westward to Libya, passing through the countries of Marmacia, Pentapolis, and others adjacent, where, though the people were both barbarous in their manners and idolatrous in their worship, yet, by his preaching and miracles, he prevailed on them to embrace the tenets of the gospel; nor did he leave them till he had confirmed them in the faith.

After this long tour he returned to Alexandria, where he preached with the greatest freedom, ordered and disposed of the affairs of the church, and wisely provided for a succession by constituting governors and pastors

of it. But the restless enemy of the souls of men would not suffer our apostle to continue in peace and quietness; for, while he was assiduously labouring in the vineyard of his Master, the idolatrous inhabitants, about the time of Easter, when they were celebrating the solemnities of Serapis, tumultuously entered the church, forced St. Mark, then performing Divine service, from thence; and, binding his feet with cords, dragged him through the streets, and over the most craggy places, to the Bucelus, a precipice near the sea, leaving him there in a lonesome prison for that night; but his great and beloved Master appeared to him in a vision, comforting and encouraging his soul under the ruins of his shattered body. The next morning early the tragedy began afresh, dragging him about in the same cruel and barbarous manner till he expired. But their malice did not end with his death; they burnt his mangled body after they had so inhumanly deprived it of life. But the Christians, after the hellish tragedy was over, gathered up his bones and ashes, and decently interred them near the place where he used to preach. His remains were afterwards, with great pomp, removed from Alexandria to Venice, where they are religiously honoured, and he adopted as the titular saint and patron of that state.

He suffered martyrdom on the 25th of April, but the year is not absolutely known; the most probable opinion, however, is, that it happened about the end of Nero's reign.

His Gospel, the only writing he left behind him, was written at the entreaty and earnest desire of the converts at Rome, who, not content to have heard St. Peter preach, pressed St. Mark, his disciple, to commit to writing an historical account of what he had delivered to them, which he performed with equal faithfulness and brevity, and, being perused and approved by St. Peter, was commanded to be publicly read in their assemblies. It was frequently styled St. Peter's Gospel, not because he dictated it to St. Mark, but because the latter composed it from the accounts St. Peter usually delivered in his discourses to the people. And this is probably the reason of what St. Chrysostom observes, that in his style and manner of expression he delights to imitate St. Peter, representing a great deal in a few words. The strict impartiality he observed in all his relations is plain, and hence, so far from concealing the shameful lapse of Peter, his dear tutor and master, he describes it with more aggravating circumstances than any other evangelist.

ST. LUKE.

THIS disciple of the blessed Jesus was born at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, a city celebrated for the pleasantness of its situation, the fertility of its soil, the riches of its commerce, the wisdom of its senate, and the civility and politeness of its inhabitants, by the pens of some of the greatest writers of those times. It was eminent for schools of learning, which produced the most renowned masters in the arts and sciences; so that being born, as it were, in the lap of the muses, he could not well fail of acquiring an ingenious and liberal education. But he was not contented with the learning of his own country; he travelled for improvement into several parts of Greece and Egypt, and became particularly skilled in physic, which he made his profession. But they who would from this particular infer the quality of his birth and fortune seem to forget that the healing art was in these early times generally practised by servants; and hence Grotius is of opinion that St. Luke was carried to Rome, and lived there as servant to some noble family, in quality of physician; but, after obtaining his freedom, he returned into his own country, and probably continued his profession till his death, it being so highly consistent with, and in many cases subservient to, the care of souls.

He is also famous for his skill in another art, namely, painting; and an ancient inscription, found in a vault near the church of St. Maria de Via Lata at Rome, supposed to have been the place where St. Paul dwelt, mentions a picture of the blessed Virgin—*Una ex* vii *ab Luca depictis*—being one of the seven painted by St. Luke.

St. Luke was a Jewish proselyte;

but when he became a Christian is uncertain. Those who understand him in the beginning of his Gospel say that he had the facts from the reports of others who were eye-witnesses, and suppose him to have been converted by St. Paul, and that he learned the history of his Gospel from the conversation of that apostle, and wrote it under his direction; and that when St. Paul, in one of his Epistles, says, "According to my Gospel," he means this of St. Luke, which he styled *his* from the great share he had in the composition of it.

On the other hand, those who hold that he wrote his Gospel from his own personal knowledge, observe that he could not receive it from St. Paul, as an eye-witness of the matters contained in it, because all those matters were transacted before his conversion; and that he never saw our Lord before he appeared to him in his journey to Damascus, which was some time after he ascended into heaven. Consequently, when St. Paul says, "According to my gospel," he means no more than that gospel in general which he preached, the whole preaching of the apostles being styled the gospel.

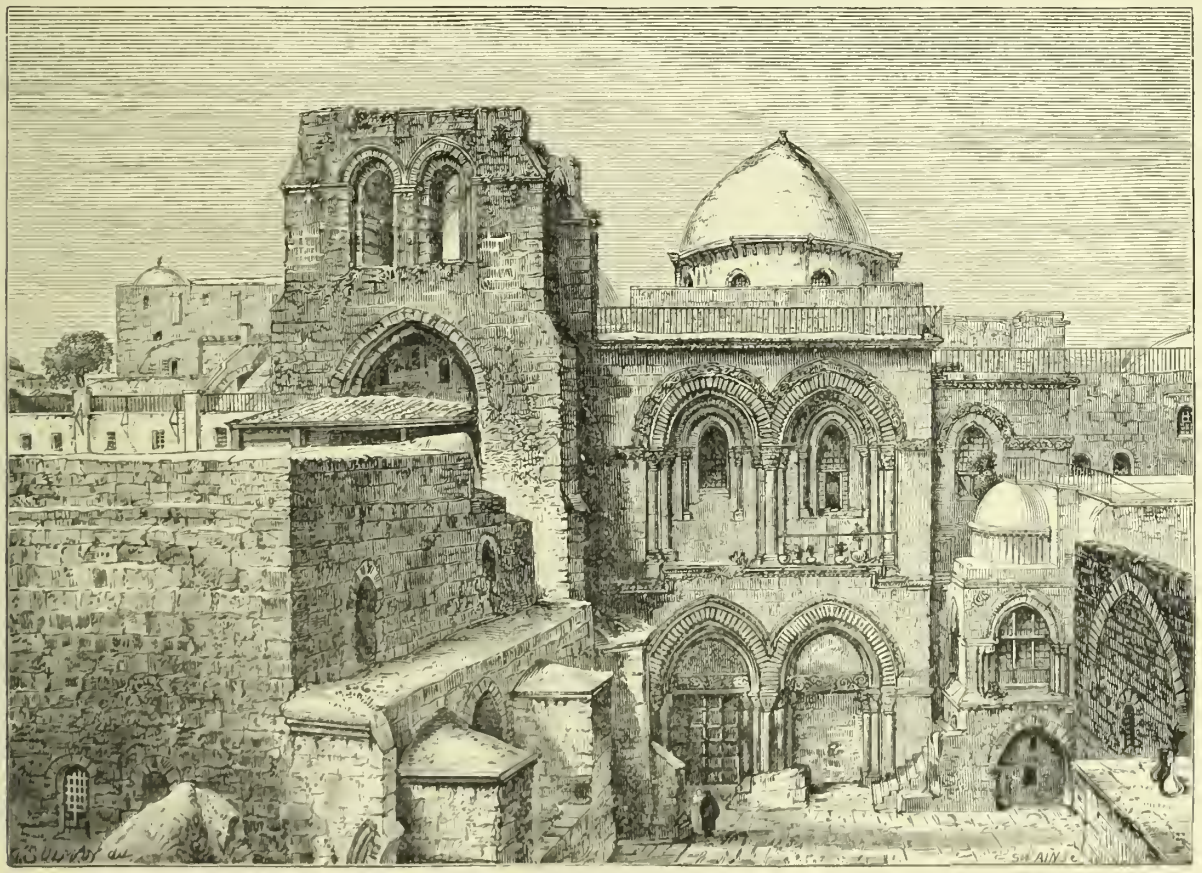
But, however this be, St. Luke became the inseparable companion of St. Paul in all his travels, and his constant fellow-labourer in the work of the ministry. This infinitely endeared him to that apostle, who seems delighted with owning him for his fellow-labourer, and in calling him the "beloved physician," and the "brother whose praise is in the gospel."

St. Luke wrote two books for the use of the church, his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, both of which he dedicated to Theophilus, which many of the ancients suppose to be a feigned name, denoting a lover of God, a title common to all sincere Christians. But others think it was a real person, because the title of "Most Excellent" is attributed to him—the usual title and form of address in those times to princes and great men.

His Gospel contains the principal transactions of our Lord's life; and the particulars omitted by him are, in general, of less importance than those of the other evangelists.

With regard to the Acts of the Apostles, written by St. Luke, the work was no doubt performed at Rome, about the time of St. Paul's imprisonment there, with which he concludes his story. It contains the actions, and sometimes the sufferings, of the principal apostles, especially St. Paul, whose activity in the cause of Christ made him bear a great part in the labours of his Master; and St. Luke, being his constant attendant, an eye-witness of the whole carriage of his life, and privy to his most intimate transactions, was consequently capable of giving a more full and satisfactory account of them. Among other things, he enumerates the great miracles the apostles did in confirmation of their doctrine.

In both these treatises his manner of writing is exact and accurate, his style noble and elegant, sublime and lofty, yet clear and perspicuous, flowing with an easy and natural grace and sweetness, admirably adapted to an historical narrative. In short, as an historian he was faithful in his relations, and elegant in his writings; as a minister careful and diligent for the good of souls; as a Christian devout and pious; and, to crown all the rest, laid down his life in testimony of the gospel he had both preached and published to the world.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

ST. BARNABAS.

ST. BARNABAS was at first called Joses, a softer termination, generally given by the Greeks to Joseph. His fellow-disciples added the name of Barnabas, as significant of some extraordinary property in him. St. Luke interprets it, "the son of consolation," which he was ever ready to administer to the afflicted, both by word and action.

He was a descendant of the tribe of Levi, of a family removed out of Judea, and settled in the isle of Cyprus, where they had purchased an estate, as the Levites might do out of their country. His parents, finding their son of a promising genius and disposition, placed him in one of the schools of Jerusalem, under the tuition of Gamaliel, St. Paul's master—an accident which, in all probability, laid the foundation for that intimacy which afterwards subsisted between these two eminent servants of Jesus.

The first mention we find of St. Barnabas in the Holy Scripture is the record of that great and worthy service he did the church of Christ, by succouring it with the sale of his patrimony in Cyprus, the whole price of which he laid at the apostles' feet, to be put into the common stock, and disposed of as they should think fit among the indigent followers of the holy Jesus. The worthy example was followed by those who were blessed with the goods of fortune: none kept their plenty to themselves, but turned their houses and lands into money, and devoted it to the common use of the church. St. Barnabas is, indeed, mentioned as selling a most valuable estate on this occasion, being the most forward and ready to begin a common stock, and set others a laudable pattern of charity and benevolence.

And now St. Barnabas became considerable in the ministry and government of the church; for we find that St. Paul, coming to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and not readily procuring admittance into the church, because he had been

so grievous a persecutor of it, and might still be suspected of a design to betray it, addressed himself to Barnabas, a leading man among the Christians, and one that had personal knowledge of him. He accordingly introduced him to Peter and James, and satisfied them of the sincerity of his conversion, and in what a miraculous manner it was brought about. This recommendation carried so much weight with it, that Paul was not only received into the communion of the apostles, but taken into Peter's house, "and abode with him fifteen days." (Gal. i. 18.)

About four or five years after this the agreeable news was brought to Jerusalem that several of their body, who had been driven out of Judea by the persecutions raised about St. Stephen, had preached at Antioch with such success that a great number, both of Jews and proselytes, embraced Christianity, and were desirous that some of the superior order would come down and confirm them. This request was immediately granted, and Barnabas was deputed to settle this new plantation; and being himself "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," his charitable deeds accompanying his discourses, and his pious life exemplifying his sound doctrine, the people were greatly influenced by him, and very large additions were made to the Christian church. But, there being too large a field for one labourer, he went to fetch Saul from Tarsus, who came back with him to Antioch, and assisted him a whole year in establishing that church. Their labours prospered; their assemblies were crowded, and the disciples, who before this were called among themselves brethren, believers, elect, and by their enemies Nazarenes and Galileans, were now "called Christians first in Antioch."

When the apostles had fulfilled their charitable embassy, and stayed some time at Jerusalem to see the good effect of it, they returned again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark, the son of Mary, sister to Barnabas, and at whose house the disciples found both security for their persons and conveniency for the solemnities of their worship. But, soon after the apostles returned to Antioch, an express relation was made to the church, by the mouth of one of the prophets who ministered there, that Barnabas and Saul should be set apart for an extraordinary work, unto which the Holy Ghost had appointed them. Upon this declaration, the church set apart a day for a solemn mission. After devout prayer and fasting, they laid their hands upon them, and ordained them to their office, which was to travel over certain countries, and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. From this joint commission, Barnabas obtained the name of an apostle, not only among later writers of the church, but with St. Paul himself, and with St. Luke in the history of the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul and Barnabas, being thus

consecrated "the apostles of the Gentiles," entered upon their province, taking with them John Mark for their minister or deacon, who assisted them in many ecclesiastical offices, particularly in taking care of the poor.

The first city they visited after their departure from Antioch was Seleucia, a city of Syria adjoining to the sea, from whence they sailed for the island of Cyprus, the native place of St. Barnabas, and arrived at Salamis, a port formerly remarkable for its trade. Here they boldly preached the doctrines of the gospel in the synagogue of the Jews, and from thence travelled to Paphos, the capital of the island, and famous for a temple dedicated to Venus, the titular goddess of Cyprus. Here their preaching was attended with remarkable success, Servius Paulus, the proconsul, being, among others, converted to the Christian faith.

Leaving Cyprus, they crossed the sea to preach in Pamphylia, where their deacon, John, to the great grief of his uncle Barnabas, left them, and returned to Jerusalem, either tired with continual travels, or discouraged at the unavoidable dangers and difficulties, which experience had sufficiently informed him would constantly attend the preachers of the gospel, from hardened Jews and idolatrous Gentiles.

Soon after their arrival at Lystra, Paul cured a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, which so astonished the inhabitants, that they believed them to be gods who had visited the world in the form of men. Barnabas they treated as Jupiter, their sovereign deity, either because of his age or the gravity and comeliness of his person; for all the writers of antiquity represent him as a person of a venerable aspect and a majestic presence. But the apostles, with the greatest humility, declared themselves to be but mortals; and the inconstant populace soon satisfied themselves of the truth of what they had asserted; for, at the persuasions of their indefatigable persecutors, who followed them hither also, they made an assault upon them, and stoned Paul, till they left him for dead; but, supported by an invisible power from on high, he soon recovered his spirits and strength, and the apostles immediately departed for Derbe. Here they applied themselves to the work of the ministry, and converted many to the religion of the blessed Jesus.

From Derbe they returned back to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, teaching that the followers of Christ must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. After a short stay they again visited the churches of Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia, where they took ship for Antioch in Syria, the place from whence they first set out. Presently after their arrival they called the church of this city together, and gave them an account of their travels, and the great suc-

cess with which their preaching to the Gentiles had been attended.

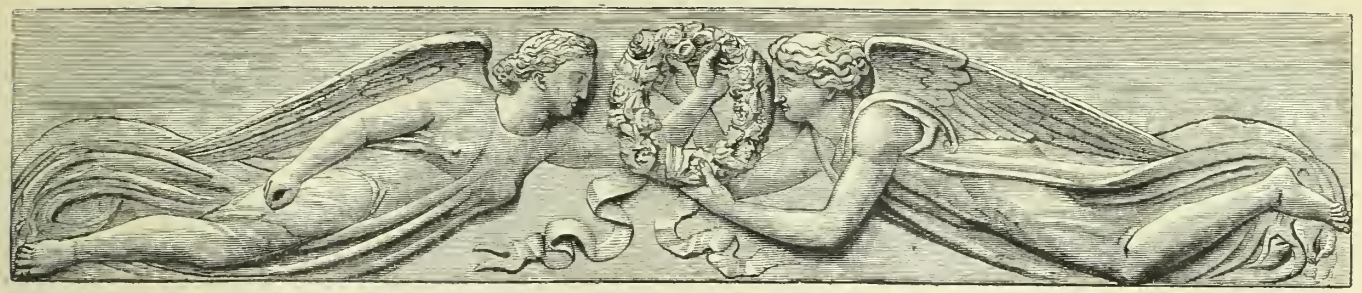
But they had not long continued in this city before their assistance was required to compose a difference in this church occasioned by some of the Jewish converts, who endeavoured to persuade the Gentiles that they were bound to observe the law of Moses, as well as that of Christ, and be circumcised as well as baptized. Barnabas endeavoured to persuade the zealots from pressing such unnecessary observances; but all his endeavours proving ineffectual, he was deputed, with St. Paul and others, to the church at Jerusalem, to submit the question to be determined there in full assembly. During their stay at Jerusalem, Mark, in all probability, reconciled himself to his uncle Barnabas, and returned with him and St. Paul to Antioch, after they had succeeded in their business at Jerusalem, and obtained a decree from the synod there that the Gentile converts should not have circumcision and other Mosaic rites imposed upon them.

This determination generally comforted and quieted the minds of the Gentiles, but it did not prevent the bigoted Jews from keeping up a separation from them; and that with so much obstinacy, that when St. Peter some time after came to Antioch, he, for fear of offending them, contradicted his former practice and late speech and vote in the synod of Jerusalem by refraining from all kind of communion with the Gentiles; and Barnabas himself, so great and good a man, was induced, by the authority of his example, to commit the same error, though doubtless, on being reproved by St. Paul, they both took more courage, and walked according to the freedom of the gospel.

Some days after this last occurrence Paul made a proposal to Barnabas that they should repeat their late travels among the Gentiles, and see how the churches they had planted increased in their numbers, and improved in the doctrines they had taught them. Barnabas very readily complied with the motion, but desired they might take with them his reconciled nephew, John Mark. This Paul absolutely refused, because, in their former voyage, Mark had not shown the constancy of a faithful minister of Christ, but consulted his own ease at a dangerous juncture, and departed from them, without leave, at Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas still insisted on taking him, and the other continuing as resolute to oppose it, a short debate arose, which terminated in a rupture, whereby these two holy men, who had for several years been companions in the ministry, and with united endeavours propagated the gospel of the Son of God, now took different provinces. Barnabas, with his kinsman, sailed to his own country, Cyprus; and Paul, accompanied by Silas, travelled to the churches of Syria and Cilicia.

After this separation from St. Paul, the sacred writers give us no account of St. Barnabas; nor are the ecclesiastical writers agreed among themselves with regard to the actions of our apostle after his sailing for Cyprus. This, however, seems to be certain—that he did not spend the whole remainder of his life in that island, but visited different parts of the world, preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, healing the sick, and working other miracles among the Gentiles. After long and painful travels, attended with different degrees of success in different places, he returned to Cyprus, his native country, where he suffered martyrdom in the following manner:—Certain Jews coming from Syria to Salamis, where Barnabas was then preaching the gospel, were highly exasperated at his extraordinary success, fell upon him as he was disputing in the synagogue, dragged him out, and, after the most inhuman tortures, stoned him to death. His kinsman, John Mark, who was a spectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave, where it remained till the time of the Emperor Zeno, in the year of Christ 485, when it was discovered, with St. Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew, written with his own hand, lying on his breast.

Viewing the Promised Land.



ST. STEPHEN.

BOTH the Scriptures and the ancient writers are silent with regard to the birth, country, and parents of St. Stephen. Epiphanius is of opinion that he was one of the seventy disciples; but this is very uncertain. Our blessed Saviour appointed his seventy disciples to teach the doctrines and preach the glad tidings of the gospel; but it does not appear that St. Stephen and the six other first deacons had any particular designation before they were chosen for the service of the tables; and therefore St. Stephen could not have been one of our Lord's disciples, though he might have often followed him and listened to his discourses.

He was remarkably zealous for the cause of religion, and full of the Holy Ghost, working many wonderful miracles before the people, and pressing them with the greatest earnestness to embrace the doctrines of the gospel.

This highly provoked the Jews, and some of the synagogue of the freed men of Cyrenia, Alexandria, and other places entered into dispute with him; but, being unable to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they suborned false witnesses against him, to testify that they heard him blaspheme against Moses and against God. Nor did they stop here; they stirred up the people by their calumnies, so that they dragged him before the council of the nation, or great Sanhedrim, where they produced false witnesses against him, who deposed that they had heard him speak against the temple and against the law, and affirm that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the holy place, and abolish the law of Moses. Stephen, supported by his own innocence and an invisible power from on high, appeared undaunted in the midst of this assembly, his countenance shining like that of an angel; and, when the high priest asked him what he had to offer against the

accusations laid to his charge, he answered in the following manner:—

Hearken unto me, ye descendants of Jacob. The Almighty, whose glory is from everlasting, appeared to our father Abraham before he sojourned in Charran, even while he dwelt in Mesopotamia, commanding him to leave his country and relations, and retire into a land which he would show him. Abraham obeyed the Divine mandate; he left the land of the Chaldeans, and pitched his tent in Charran, from whence, after his father was dead, he removed into Canaan, even the land you now inhabit; but he gave him no inheritance in this country, not even so much as to set his foot upon. He promised, indeed, he would give it him for a possession, which should descend to his posterity, though at this time he had no child. God also indicated to him that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, the people of which should make them bondmen, and treat them cruelly four hundred years, after which he would judge that nation, and bring out his people, who should serve him in this place, as an earnest of which he gave him the covenant of circumcision, and afterwards a son, whom Abraham circumcised the eighth day, calling his name Isaac, who begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. But these, moved with envy, sold their brother Joseph into Egypt, where the Almighty protected him, delivered him from all his afflictions, endued him with wisdom, and gave him favour in the sight of Pharaoh, the monarch of Egypt, who made him governor both of his house and kingdom. Soon after this exaltation of Joseph, the countries of Egypt and Canaan were afflicted with a terrible famine, and our fathers found no sustenance either for themselves or their flocks. But, as soon as Jacob heard the welcome tidings that there was corn in Egypt, he sent our fathers thither to purchase bread for the famine of his household; and in their second journey thither Joseph made himself known to his brethren, and also informed Pharaoh of his country and relations, after which Joseph's father, with his whole house, consisting of threescore and fifteen souls, went down into Egypt, where both Jacob and our fathers died, and were carried to Sychem, and deposited in the sepulchre purchased by Abraham of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem. But, as the time for fulfilling the promise made to Abraham approached, the people multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, who was not acquainted with the merits of Joseph, and the great things he had done for that country. This prince used our fathers with cruelty, and artfully attempted to destroy all the male children. At this time Moses was born, and, being exceedingly fair, was nourished three months in his father's house; but it being dangerous to conceal him there any longer, he was hid among the flags on the bank of the river,

when the daughter of Pharaoh found him, and educated him as her own son. Thus Moses became acquainted with all the learning of Egypt, and was mighty both in word and deed; but, when he was about forty years old, he thought proper to visit his brethren, the children of Israel; and, seeing an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, he assisted the suffering person, and slew the Egyptian, supposing that his brethren would have been persuaded that from his hand, with the assistance of the Almighty, they might expect deliverance; but they conceived no hopes of this kind. The next day he again visited them, and, seeing two of them striving together, he endeavoured to make them friends. Ye are brethren, said he to them; why do ye injure one another? But he who did his neighbour wrong, instead of listening to his advice, thrust him away, saying, By what authority art thou a judge of our actions? Wilt thou kill me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? Moses, at this answer, fled from Egypt, and sojourned in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. And at the end of forty years the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, out of the middle of a bush burning with fire, the sight of which surprised Moses; and, as he drew near to view more attentively so uncommon an appearance, God called unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, at which Moses trembled, and turned aside his face. But the Lord said to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have long seen the afflictions of my people which are in Egypt; I have heard their cries, and am now descended from heaven to deliver them. Come, therefore, I will send thee into Egypt. Thus was that Moses, whom they refused, sent by God to be a ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. Accordingly, he brought them out, after he had shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. It is this Moses that told our fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you and your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. And this prophet is the same who was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake unto Moses in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; the same who received the lively oracles to give unto us; he whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and were desirous of returning to their state of bondage, commanding Aaron to make them gods to go before them, and pretending that they knew not what was become of Moses, who delivered them from the slavery of Egypt. They now made a calf, offered sacrifices to it, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands, on which the Almighty abandoned them to wor-

ship the host of heaven, as the prophets have recorded. Oh, ye houses of Israel! have you offered unto me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: I will carry you away beyond Babylon. Our fathers were possessed of the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, being made according to the pattern Moses had seen in the Mount. This tabernacle our fathers brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, who were driven out by the Almighty, till the days of David, a favourite of the Most High, and who was desirous of finding a tabernacle for the God of Jacob; but Solomon built him a house. We must not, however, think that the Almighty will reside in temples made with hands, as the prophet beautifully observes, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord, or where is the place of my rest? Hath not mine hand made all these things? Ye stiff-necked, ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye will for ever resist the Holy Ghost. Ye tread in the paths of your fathers; as they did, so do you still continue to do. Did not your fathers persecute every one of the prophets? Did not they slay them who showed the coming of the Holy One, whom ye yourselves have betrayed and murdered? Ye have received the law by the deposition of angels, but never kept it.

At these words they were so highly enraged, that they all gnashed their teeth against him. But Stephen, lifting up his eyes to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of Omnipotence, upon which he said to the council, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This so greatly provoked the Jews, that they cried out with one voice, and stopped their ears, as if they had heard some dreadful blasphemy; and, falling upon him, they dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death. It was the custom of the Jews, on these occasions, for the witnesses to throw the first stone. Whether they observed this particular at the martyrdom of Stephen is uncertain; but the evangelist tells us that the witnesses were principally concerned in this action, for they stripped off their clothes, and laid them at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul, then a violent persecutor of the Christian church, but afterwards one of the most zealous preachers of the gospel.

Stephen, while they were mangling his body with stones, was praying to Omnipotence for their pardon. "Lord," said he, "lay not this sin to their charge;" and then, calling on his dear Redeemer to receive his spirit, he yielded up his soul.

ST. TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY was a convert and disciple of St. Paul. He was born either at Lystra or Derbe. His father was a Gentile, but his mother a Jewess, whose name was Eunice, and that of his grandmother Lois. These particulars are noticed because St. Paul commends their piety and the good education which they had given Timothy. When St. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, about A.D. 51 or 52, the brethren gave a very high testimony of Timothy; and the apostle, after initiating him at Lystra, received him into his company. Timothy applied himself to labour with St. Paul in the business of the gospel, and did him very important services through the whole course of his preaching. It is not known when he was made a bishop; but it is believed to have taken place very early, and that in consequence of a revelation or order from the Holy Ghost. St. Paul calls him not only his dearly-beloved son, but also his brother, the companion of his labours, and a man of God.

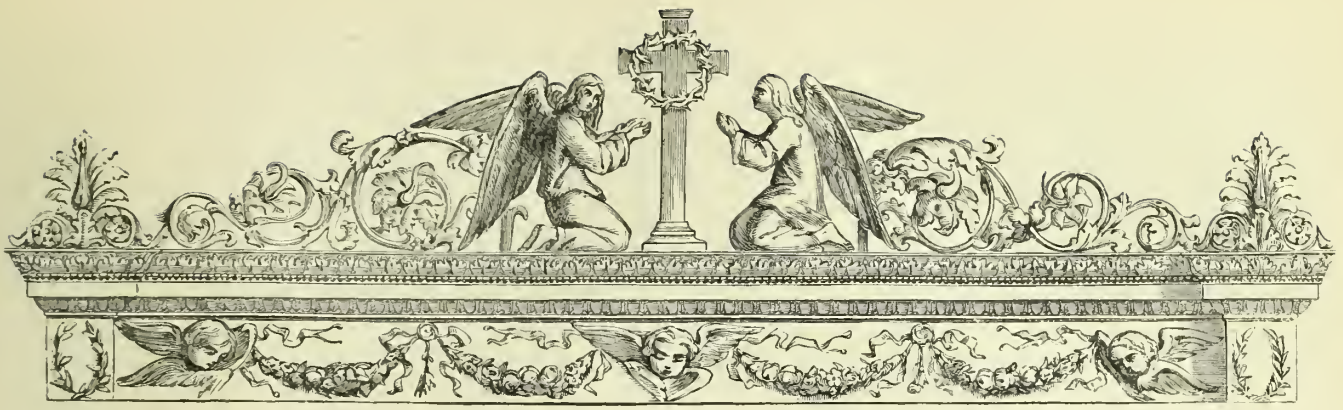
Timothy accompanied St. Paul to Macedonia, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea; and, when the apostle went from Berea, he left Timothy and Silas there to confirm the converts. When he came to Athens he sent for Timothy; and when he was come, and had given him an account of the churches at Macedonia, St. Paul sent him back to Thessalonica, from whence he afterwards returned with Silas, and came to St. Paul at Corinth. There he continued with him, and the apostle mentions him with Silas, at the beginning of the two Epistles which he then wrote to the Thessalonians.

Some years after this St. Paul sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, and gave Timothy orders to call at Corinth, to refresh the minds of the Corinthians with regard to the truths which he had inculcated upon them; and some time after, writing to the same Corinthians, he

recommends them to take care of Timothy, and send him back in peace. After this Timothy returned to St. Paul in Asia, who there stayed for him. They went together into Macedonia; and the apostle puts Timothy's name with his own, before the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which he wrote to them from Macedonia about the middle of the year of Christ 57; and he sends his recommendations to the Romans in the letter which he wrote them from Corinth the same year.

When St. Paul returned from Rome, in 64, he left Timothy at Ephesus to take care of that church, of which he was the first bishop, as he is recognised by the Council of Chalcedon. St. Paul wrote to him from Macedonia the first of the two letters which are addressed to him. He recommends him to be more moderate in his austerities, and to drink a little wine, because of the weakness of his stomach and his frequent infirmities. After the apostle came to Rome in the year 65, being now very near his death, he wrote to him his second letter, which is full of the marks of his kindness and tenderness for this his dear disciple, and which is justly looked upon as the last will of St. Paul. He desires him to come to Rome to him before winter, and bring with him several things which St. Paul had left at Troas. If Timothy went to Rome, as it is probable he did, he must have been a witness there of the martyrdom of this apostle in the year of Christ 66.

If he did not die before the year 97, we can hardly doubt but that he must be the angel of the church of Ephesus to whom St. John writes in his Revelation, though the reproaches which the Holy Ghost makes to him, &c., of having left his first love do not seem to agree to so holy a man as Timothy was. Thus he speaks to him: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." The greater number of interpreters think that these reproaches do not so much concern the person of Timothy as that of some members of his church, whose zeal was grown cool. But others are persuaded that they may be applied to Timothy himself, who made ample amends by the martyrdom which he suffered for what the Holy Ghost reproaches him with in this place. We are not to think that the saints are here in an impeccable state, and that their zeal never suffers any diminution. It is thought that Timothy had Onesimus for his successor.



TITUS.

TITUS was a Gentile by religion and birth, but converted by St. Paul, who calls him his son. St. Jerome says that he was St. Paul's interpreter, and that probably because he might write what St. Paul dictated, or explained in Latin what this apostle said in Greek, or rendered into Greek what St. Paul said in Hebrew or Syriac. St. Paul took him with him to Jerusalem when he went thither in the year 51 of the vulgar era, about deciding the question which was then started, whether the converted Gentiles ought to be made subject to the ceremonies of the law. Some would then have obliged him to circumcise Titus, but neither he nor Titus would consent to it. Titus was sent by the same apostle to Corinth upon occasion of some disputes which then divided the church. He was well received by the Corinthians, and very much satisfied with their ready compliance, but would receive nothing from them, intimating thereby the disinterestedness of his master.

From hence he went to St. Paul in Macedonia, and gave him an account of the state of the church at Corinth. A little while after the apostle desired him to return again to Corinth, to set things in order against his coming. Titus readily undertook this journey, and departed immediately, carrying with him St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Titus was made bishop of the isle of Crete about the 63rd year of Christ, when St. Paul was obliged to quit this island, in order to take care of the other churches. The following year he wrote to him to desire that, as soon as he should have sent Tychicus of Artemas to him for supplying his place in Crete, Titus would come to him to Nicopolis in Macedonia, or to

Nicopolis in Epirus, upon the Gulf of Ambracia, where the apostle intended to pass his winter.

The subject of this Epistle is to represent to Titus what are the qualities that a bishop should be endued with. As the principal function which Titus was to exercise in the isle of Crete was to ordain priests and bishops, it was highly incumbent on him to make a discreet choice. The apostle also gives him a sketch of the advice and instructions which he was to propound to all sorts of persons; to the aged, both men and women; to young people of each sex; to slaves or servants. He exhorts him to keep a strict authority over the Cretans, and to reprove them with severity, as being a people addicted to lying, wickedness, idleness, and gluttony. And, as many converted Jews were in the churches of Crete, he exhorts Titus to oppose their vain traditions and Jewish fables, and, at the same time, to show them that the observation of the legal ceremonies is no longer necessary, that the distinction of meat is now abolished, and that everything is pure and clean to those who are so themselves. He puts him in mind of exhorting the faithful to be obedient to temporal power; to avoid disputes, quarrels, and slander; to apply themselves to honest callings; and to shun the company of heretics after the first and second admonitions.

The Epistle to Titus has always been acknowledged by the church. The Marcionites did not receive it, nor did the Basilidians and some other heretics; but Titian, the head of the Encratites, received it, and preferred it before all the rest. It is not certainly known from what place it was written, nor by whom it was sent.

Titus was deputed to preach the gospel in Dalmatia; and he was still there in the year 65, when the apostle wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy. He afterwards returned into Crete, from which it is said he propagated the gospel into the neighbouring islands. He died at the age of ninety-four, and was buried in Crete. We are assured that the cathedral of the city of Candia is dedicated to his name, and that his head is preserved there entire. The Greeks keep his festival on the 25th of August, and the Latins on the 4th of January.

THE VIRGIN MARY.

AS we are taught by the predictions of the prophets that a virgin was to be the mother of the promised Messiah, so we are assured, by the unanimous concurrence of the evangelists, that this virgin's name was Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anna, of the tribe of Judah, and married to Joseph, of the same tribe. The Scripture, indeed, tells no more of the blessed Virgin's parents than that she was of the family of David, and of the town of Bethlehem.

All that is said concerning the birth of Mary and her parents is to be found only in some apocryphal writings, but which, however, are very ancient. St. John says that Mary, the wife of Cleophas, who was the mother of those whom the gospel styles our Lord's brethren, was the Virgin's sister, Mary, that was of the royal race of David. She was allied, likewise, to the family of Aaron, since Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias and mother of John the Baptist, was her cousin.

Not to build upon uncertainties, thus much we are assured by the testimony of an angel—that she was happy above all other women in the Divine favour, that she was full of grace, and that the Lord was with her in a peculiar manner. For since the beneficent Son of God, in order to become a man and to dwell among us, was obliged to take a human body from some woman, it was agreeable to his infinite wisdom that he should choose for this purpose one whose endowments of body and mind were most holy and pious, who excelled the rest of her sex in chaste and virtuous dispositions, and who, in short, was a repository of all the Divine graces.

The excesses of that devotion which has been paid to the blessed Virgin, and the legendary tales and lying visions of monks, cannot in reason blemish her real excellencies, no more

than the idolatry of the pagans can obscure the light of the sun which it deifies. After all the abuses of superstition or profaneness, the extremes of honour and dishonour, there will ever be a very high esteem and veneration due to the mother of the blessed Jesus.

That the mother of our Lord, notwithstanding her marriage, was even in that state to remain a pure virgin, and to conceive Christ in a miraculous manner, is the clear doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. "Behold," says Isaiah, in chap. vii., prophesying of this mysterious incarnation, "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son." The Hebrew word *Almah* most properly

Bethlehem, with the Church of the Nativity and Convents, from the North.

signifies a virgin; and so it is translated here by all the ancient interpreters, and never once used in the Scripture in any other sense, as several learned men have proved, against the pretensions particularly of the modern Jews. It primarily signifies *hid*, or *concealed*, whence it is used to denote a virgin, because of the custom in eastern countries of keeping such concealed from the view of men, never suffering them to stir out of the women's apartment.

Though we cannot doubt but that God, who ordained this mystery, provided for all circumstances requisite to its accomplishment, yet we may consider which way a decorum

was preserved in this case by marriage. St. Matthew says the Virgin was espoused to Joseph, and that before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost, whence we may conclude that it was not a constant custom for the bride to go and live at the bridegroom's house immediately upon her being affianced to him.

Notwithstanding the various circumstances relating to this affair, as told us in apocryphal books, are not to be relied on as certain, yet, however, Mary's resolution of continency, even in a married state, cannot be called in question, since her virginity is attested by the gospel; and that herself, speaking to the angel who declared to her that she should become the mother of a Son, told him that she knew not a man, or that she lived in continency with her husband. For which reason, when Joseph perceived her pregnancy, he was at first so extremely surprised and scandalised at it, that he resolved to put her away, but secretly, without making any noise, and without observing the common formalities; for he knew the mutual resolution they had agreed to of being in continence. though in a state of marriage.

The Virgin Mary, then, being espoused or married to Joseph, the angel Gabriel appeared to her, in order to acquaint her that she should become the mother of the Messiah. Mary asked him how that could be, since she knew no man, to which the angel replied that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the Highest should overshadow her, so that she should conceive without the concurrence of any man. And to confirm what he had said to her, and show that nothing is impossible to God, he added that her cousin Elizabeth, who was both old and barren, was then in the sixth month of her pregnancy. Mary answered him, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And, by the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost, she presently conceived the Son of God, the true Emmanuel—that is to say, God with us. Whether the Holy Virgin, immediately after the annunciation, went up to the Passover at Jerusalem, (as some have imagined, this being the season of the year for it,) or not, we have no account from the evangelist St. Luke; but this he assures us—that a little while after she set out for Hebron, a city in the mountains of Judah, in order to visit her cousin Elizabeth, to congratulate her upon her pregnancy, which she had learned from the angel, at an age when such a blessing was not usually to be expected. And no sooner had she entered the house and begun to speak than, upon Elizabeth's hearing the voice of Mary's salutation, her child, young John the Baptist, transported with supernatural emotions of joy, leaped in her womb, whereupon she was filled with the Holy Ghost; and being, by Divine inspiration, acquainted with the mystery of the in-

carnation, she re-saluted Mary, and cried out, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." Then Mary, filled with acknowledgments and supernatural light, praised God, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," &c., as we find it in the hymn called Magnificat.

After Mary had continued here about three months, till Elizabeth was delivered,—as St. Ambrose thinks, that she might see him on whose account she principally made that visit,—she then returned to her own house at Nazareth.

When she was ready to be delivered an edict was published by Cæsar Augustus in the year of the world 4000, the first of Christ, and the third before the vulgar era, which decreed that all the subjects of the Roman empire should go to their respective cities and places, there to have their names registered according to their families. Thus Joseph and Mary, who were both of the lineage of David, repaired to their city of Bethlehem, the original and native place of their family. But while they were in this city, the time being fulfilled in which Mary was to be delivered, she brought forth her first-born Son, wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger of the stable, or cavern, whither they had retired; for they could find no place in the public inn, because of the great concourse of people that were then at Bethlehem on the same occasion; or they were forced to withdraw into the stable of the inn, not being able to get a more convenient place for her to be delivered.

The Greek fathers generally agree that the place of Christ's birth was a cavern. Justin and Eusebius place it out of the city, but in the neighbourhood; and St. Jerome says it was at the extremity of the city, towards the south. It was commonly believed that the Virgin brought forth Jesus the night after her arrival at Bethlehem, or on the 25th of December. Such is the ancient tradition of the church. The fathers inform us that Mary brought forth Jesus Christ without pain, and without the assistance of any midwife, because she had conceived him without concupiscence; and that neither she, nor the fruit she brought forth, had any share in the curse pronounced against Adam and Eve.

At the same time the angels made the birth of Christ known to the shepherds who were in the fields near Bethlehem, and who came in the night to see Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger, in order to pay him their tribute of adoration. Mary took notice of all these things, and laid them up in

The Virgin Mary & Infant Jesus

her heart. Some time after came the magi, or wise men, from the East, and brought to Jesus the mysterious presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, having been directed thither by a star, which led the way before them, to the very house where the babe lay. After this, being warned by an angel that appeared to them in a dream, they returned into their own country by a different way from that by which they came, without giving Herod the intelligence he wanted, which, he pretended, was in order to come and worship the babe, though his real design was to cut him off, from a jealousy of his rivalling that artful monarch in his kingdom.

But the time of Mary's purification being come—that is, forty days after the birth of Jesus—she went to Jerusalem, there to present her Son in the temple, and there to offer the sacrifice appointed by the law for the purification of women after childbirth. At that time there was at Jerusalem an old man named Simeon, who was full of the Holy Ghost, and had received a secret assurance that he should not die before he had seen Christ the Lord. Accordingly, he came into the temple by the impulse of the Spirit of God, and, taking the little Jesus in his arms, he blessed the Lord; and then, addressing himself to Mary, said, This child is sent for the rising and falling of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, even so far as that thy own soul shall be pierced as with a sword, that the secret thoughts in the hearts of many may be discovered.

Afterwards, when Joseph and Mary were preparing to return to their own country of Nazareth, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, bidding him to retire into Egypt with Mary and the child, because Herod had a design to destroy Jesus. Joseph obeyed the admonition, and continued in Egypt till after the death of Herod, when both he and Mary returned to Nazareth, not daring to go to Bethlehem, because it was in the jurisdiction of Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod the Great.

Joseph and Mary went every year to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover; and, when Jesus was twelve years of age, they brought him with them to the capital. When the days of the festival were ended they set out on their return home; but the child Jesus continued at Jerusalem without their perceiving it, and, thinking that he might be with some of the company, they went on a day's journey, when, not finding him among their acquaintance, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him. Three days after they found him in the temple, sitting among the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. When they saw him they were filled with astonishment; and Mary said to him, My Son, why have you served us thus? Behold your father and myself, who have sought you in great affliction. Jesus an-

swered them, Why did you seek me? Did not you know that I must be employed about my Father's business? Afterwards he returned with them to Nazareth, and lived in filial submission to them; but his mother laid up all these things in her heart. The gospel says nothing more of the Virgin Mary till the marriage at Cana of Galilee, where she was present with her son Jesus.

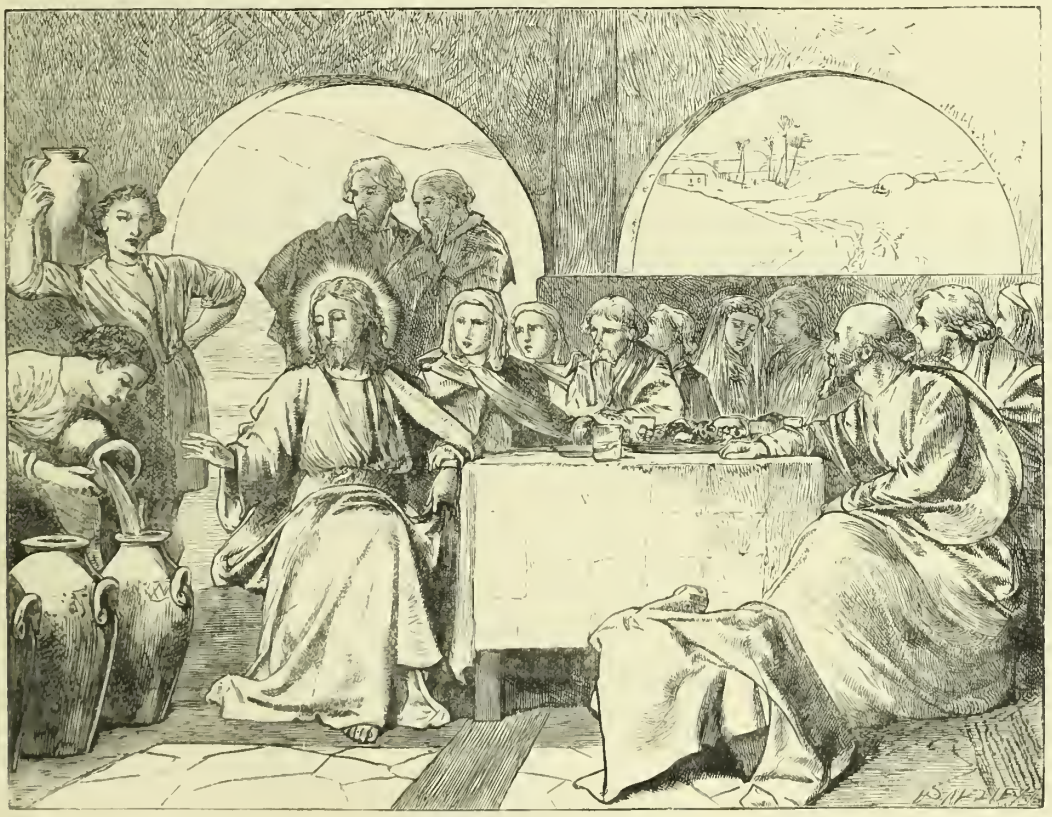
In the thirty-third year of Jesus Christ, and the thirtieth of the vulgar era, our Saviour resolved to manifest himself to the world, and therefore went to the baptism of St. John, from thence into the wilderness, and thence to the above-mentioned wedding, to which he, with his mother and his disciples, had been invited. At this entertainment the provision of wine being somewhat scanty, (probably because the friends of the married couple were but mean), Christ's mother told her Son they had no wine, not doubting of his power to supply them, to which Jesus answered in terms which had some appearance of a rebuke, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." St. Chrysostom and his followers, in their explications, impute what was said by the Holy Virgin to some motive of vanity, and that she was tempted by a desire of seeing her own credit raised by the miracles of her Son; but the other fathers and commentators ascribe it to her charity and compassion towards these poor people. And it is thought that Christ's answer was intended for more general use than the present occasion; namely, to teach us to wait God's time of doing his own works; and certainly our Lord designed no affront to his mother, to whom he always paid a pious and filial reverence. This answer is imputed by the said fathers and commentators to Jesus, not as man, but to Jesus as God. In this respect he says to Mary, What have I to do with thee? I know when I ought to show forth my power; nor does it belong to you to appoint me the time of working miracles, since the proper time for this has not yet begun; and further intimating that when it did these were not to be wrought out of any private, partial, and civil views, but in pursuance of that great end which he had in charge —the conversion and salvation of mankind. And so his mother understood him, receiving the answer with meekness, and charging the servants to attend him, and to do whatever he commanded them.

There being in the room six great stone pitchers, Jesus ordered them to be filled brimful of water, and afterwards commanded the servants to fill out and carry it to the master of the feast, who, on tasting it, found it was excellent wine. And this is the first miracle Jesus wrought at the beginning of his public ministry.

From hence our Lord went to Capernaum with his mother and brethren—that is, with his relations and disciples—in order, as St. Chrysostom thinks, to fix the Virgin Mary

in a settled habitation, while he travelled about the country in the exercise of his ministry; and this, indeed, seems to be the place where the Holy Virgin afterwards principally resided. St. Epiphanius, on the contrary, believed that she followed him everywhere during the whole time of his preaching, though we do not find that the evangelists make any mention of her when they speak of several holy women of Galilee who followed him and ministered to his necessities.

We learn, from the third chapter of St. Mark, that on a certain day in the year of Christ 34, and vulgar era 31, as Jesus Christ was teaching in a house at Capernaum, so great a crowd of people stood about him, that neither he nor his disciples had time to take any refreshment, which caused a re-

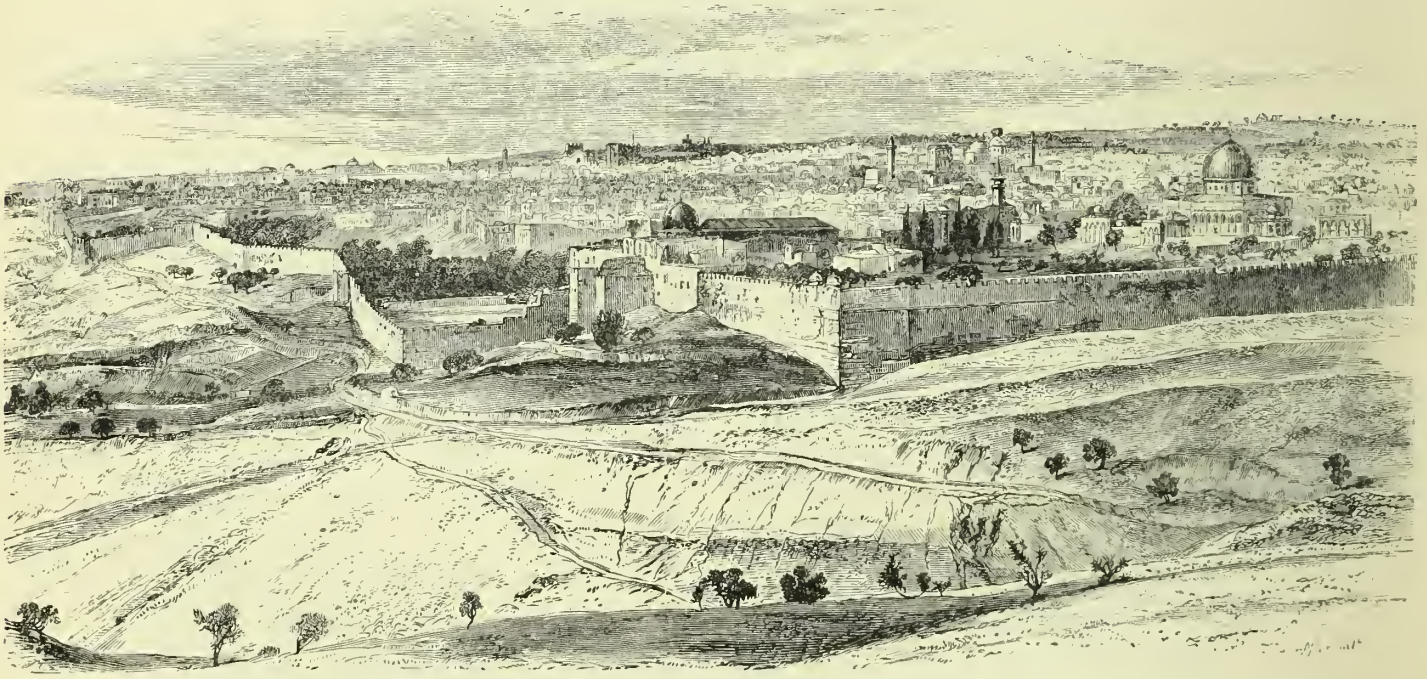


Jesus turning the Water into Wine.

port to be spread abroad that he had fainted away, or fallen into a swoon: thus Grotius interprets the word *exeste*. The Greek term might insinuate that he was become mad, or had lost his understanding; and the Vulgate reads it, "Dicebant enim quoniem in furorem versus est," which our translators have rendered, "They say he was beside himself." The mother of Jesus and his brethren, as it was natural for them, upon hearing such a report, came instantly to seek him, and endeavoured to take him out of the crowd, in order to give him all the relief in their power. It was not the people, without doubt, who made so wrong a judgment of Jesus, but the ignorant multitude, or the Pharisees, who said in the same

place that he was possessed of the devil.

The Virgin, and the brethren or relations of Jesus, came, therefore, to see what had given occasion to this report; and, when they could not get into the house for the throngs of people, they caused a message to be conveyed from one to another, till it was told Jesus that his mother and his brethren were at the door, and desired to speak with him. Jesus being accordingly informed of their coming, and that they waited to speak with him, being at that instant engaged in the work of his ministry, preaching the word of God, he made this reply: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" and, looking upon those that were round about him, he said, "Behold my mother and my brethren;" declaring that whosoever did the will of his heavenly Father, the same



View of Jerusalem from the spot where Christ beheld the City, and wept over it.

was his mother, and sister, and brother. This was what Christ had taught in another place, that we must prefer God to all human relations, and give the preference to his service. But this saying could not reflect upon his mother, who was among the principal of those who did the will of his heavenly Father. Immediately upon her approach a woman of the company said with a loud voice, directing her words to Jesus, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;" to which he replied, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it;" not intimating hereby that she who had the honour to bear him did not deserve to be called blessed throughout all generations, but that even her happiness consisted more in doing the will of Christ than in giving him a human body.

From this time we have no further account of the Holy Virgin till we find her in Jerusalem at the last Passover our Saviour celebrated there, which was in the thirty-sixth year of Christ, and thirty-third of the vulgar era. In this city she saw all that was transacted against him, followed him to Mount Calvary, and stayed at the foot of the cross during the passion of her blessed Son. We cannot doubt but her soul was at this time pierced through, as old Simeon had prophesied, with the most acute pains for the death of such a Son. Yet her constancy was remarkable; for, when the apostles were all frightened away from their Master, she, with a courage undaunted and worthy of the mother of God, continued even in the midst of the executioners, being prepared to die with her Son.

On this melancholy occasion we cannot but suppose the Holy Virgin to have been affected with sentiments fit for one who had so miraculously conceived, and so carefully observed and laid up in her mind all occurrences that related to the Son of God.

Jesus Christ, who came to set us a pattern of all virtue through the whole course of his life, was pleased in his last moments to teach us that, in what circumstances soever we are, we must never cast off that love and care which God's law obliges us to have for those who gave us life. Being now ready to leave the world, and seeing his own mother at the cross, and his beloved disciple, St. John, near her, he bequeathed her to him by his last will and testament, saying to his mother, "Woman, behold thy Son;" and to the disciple, "Behold thy mother;" and from that hour the disciple took her home to his own house.

It is not to be doubted but that our Saviour appeared to his holy mother immediately after his resurrection, and that she was the first, or at least one of the first, to whom he vouchsafed this great consolation.

St. Luke acquaints us, in the first chapter of the Acts, that the Virgin Mary was with the apostles and others at his ascension, and continued with them when assembled at Jerusalem after his ascension, waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost; and it is probable that from her they learned the whole history of our Lord's private life before his baptism, though St. Chrysostom will have them to be taught it by revelation. After this she dwelt in the house of St. John the evangelist, who took care of her as of his own mother. It is thought that he took her along with him to Ephesus, where he died in an extreme old age; and there is a letter of the Œcumenical Council of Ephesus importing that in the fifth century it was believed she was buried there.

Yet this opinion was not so universally received but that some authors of the same age think the Virgin Mary died and was buried at Jerusalem; or rather, in her se-

pulchre at Gethsemane, near that city, where, to this day, it is shown in a magnificent church dedicated to her name.

Epiphanius, the most learned father of the fourth century, declares that he could not tell whether she died a natural death or by martyrdom, or whether she remained immortal, or whether she was buried or not. "None," says he, "knows anything of her decease; but that it was glorious cannot be doubted. That body which was perfectly chaste and pure enjoys a happiness worthy of her, through whom the Sun of Righteousness arose and shone upon the world."

A learned writer has added to the before-cited passage of the Council of Ephesus another remark from their acts—that the cathedral church of Ephesus was dedicated under the name of the Virgin Mary, and that we find no other church of her name at that time in any approved author; for though the Holy Virgin was always held in great veneration, yet it was not the custom of the first ages to give the name of any saint to a church, except they had some of the relics, or built it in the place where such a saint was martyred, or for some reason of the like nature.

The sentiments of the Roman Church are, that she is dead; but they are divided as to her rising again, or whether she stays for the general resurrection at Ephesus, Jerusalem, or any other place.

With regard to the age at which she died, and the precise year of her death, it is needless to trouble ourselves about this inquiry, since nothing can be said on these matters but what is very doubtful, and they cannot be fixed but at random. Nicephorus Callistus, and those that have followed him, give no proof of what they advance on this subject, and therefore deserve no credit. Nor shall we build upon the description of the Holy Virgin given us by the same author, who says that she was of a moderate stature; or, according to some, a little below the ordinary stature of women; that her complexion was of the colour of wheat, her hair fair, her eyes lively, the eyeballs yellowish or olive-coloured, her eyebrows black and semicircular, her nose pretty long, her lips red, her hands and fingers large, her air grave, simple, and modest, her clothes neat without any pride or ostentation, and of the natural colour of the wool. It has been pretended that St. Luke had drawn her picture; and in several places are shown pictures of her, which they affirm to be copies from the original by St. Luke. But the ancients have nowhere informed us that St. Luke was a painter, or that he had painted the Holy Virgin. The abovementioned Nicephorus Callistus, an author of the fourteenth century, is the first who has spoken of this in a positive manner; but Theodorus, lecturer of the church of Constantinople, who lived in the sixth century, says that Eudocia sent from Jerusalem to Constantinople, to the Empress

Pulcheria, a picture of the Holy Virgin painted by St. Luke. But we need be in no great pain about this, since the true images of saints are the ideas of their virtues which we should form in our minds and express by our actions. Certain it is that this holy evangelist has acquainted us with some particulars of the life of the Holy Virgin that could hardly be learned from any one but herself, which may incline us to believe that he had the happiness of her acquaintance, and a good share of her confidence.

With regard to her character, we shall only mention, in general, that common remark which the evangelists make—that she was more disposed to think than to speak, and observed the extraordinary things which were said of her Son with silence; or, as they express it, "she pondered them in her heart."

There are shown some letters of the Virgin Mary to St. Ignatius the martyr, and from St. Ignatius to the Virgin. St. Bernard believed them to be genuine, but now no one doubts that they are spurious. The same judgment is formed about the pretended letters of the Virgin to the people of Messina, and to those of Florence, which they pretend she wrote from Jerusalem in Hebrew, but were translated by St. Paul into Greek; at least, that to the Messinians, and which Constantine Lescaries turned into Latin.

The visions and revelations which some Romish monks pretend to have had of the blessed Virgin sufficiently destroy themselves, as being not only absurd and ridiculous, but inconsistent with her humour and sanctity, though we cannot from hence absolutely conclude that she never appeared to any holy persons, and, as some of the fathers of the church give an account of such apparitions, we shall select the following.

St. Gregory Nyssen reports of Gregory Thaumaturgas that he being made bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, in Pontus, and very solicitous concerning the doctrine which he should preach to his people, the blessed Virgin appeared to him in a form more glorious than any being upon earth, with St. John the apostle in her company, to whom she recommended the instructing of Gregory in the mysteries of the Christian religion, upon which the apostle dictated to him a short confession of faith, which Gregory forthwith committed to writing. This was preserved afterwards with the greatest care; and Gregory Nyssen assures us that it became the standing creed of Neo-Cæsarea, and kept that church clear from Arianism, whilst all other places were infected.

Gregory Nazianzen likewise gives us the following relation—that St. Justina, the virgin who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian, seeing herself attacked by the magic arts which Cyprian employed against her, had recourse to the Virgin Mary, and entreated her to succour a helpless maid against the infernal powers. Her prayers were heard, the devils vanquished; Cyprian was thereupon

converted, and embraced the Christian faith, and was afterwards an illustrious bishop, and obtained the crown of martyrdom with St. Justina. This story, says Phocius, was largely mentioned by the Empress Eudocia, in an heroic poem of three books. Bishop Fell thinks that this story which is told of St. Cyprian is much interpolated, or rather invented, by some of those who took pleasure in improving the lives of martyrs with some new materials. Dr. Cave justly suspects that this Cyprian is a different person from the great bishop of Carthage, and by mistake confounded with him by Nazianzen, Prudentius, Metaphrastus, and others. However, he truly observes that the history is older than the times of Nazianzen.

But not to lay greater stress upon such things than they challenge from the credit of the relaters, and the probability which they carry upon the face of them, let it suffice to have mentioned only these two instances, and refer the credibility to the judgment of the candid reader.

The Jews, those professed enemies of our Saviour, that Gentile brood of blinded progenitors and obstinate miscreants, have vented many falsities against the Virgin Mary in the book called Toledos Jesu, or the life of Jesus Christ, which they themselves have published. From this treatise some of our puny modern deists seem to have adopted those infamous notions that tend to blacken the Virgin, with regard to our Saviour's descent and birth, and in direct opposition to the evangelical history of that sacred event.

However contemptible, in reality, such adversaries are upon several accounts, thus much seemed necessary to be said in order to obviate the poison which they spread among the middle and lower classes of mankind, among which they are conversant, and whence the heroes of that sect principally spring up.

The Mahometans, on the contrary, entertain great sentiments of respect and esteem for her, which one would hardly believe of people so far out of the way of salvation. (See the chapter in the Alcoran about Mary and Herbelot.) But they do not confine themselves within the bounds of truth and sobriety; for they add many fabulous stories, which we shall not repeat, to what are otherwise known concerning Mary.

As to the purity of the Holy Virgin, in her birth and in the conception of the Word, and with regard to her virginity, both before and after her bringing forth, they speak in such a manner as might well be a shame to many Christians, and particularly quash the brutal effrontery of the above-mentioned pygmean antagonists in their impudent attempts to depreciate her, the main drift of which glances at, and is plainly meant as a secret thrust against her great and heavenly progeny.

The Mahometans say, in conformity to the gospel account, that the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary to declare to her the birth of Jesus Christ. And

further, he said to her, "O Mary, thou art elected, purified, and in a most particular manner chosen from among all the women in the world! O Mary, submit yourself to the Lord, prostrate yourself, and adore him with all the creatures that worship him! I am come to tell you a great secret: God declares his Word to you, whose name shall be Christ, or Jesus the Messiah, who shall be your Son, most worthy of respect, both in this and the other world."

Abulsarage writes, in his Dynastics, that it was a tradition among the oriental Christians that the Holy Virgin was but thirteen years of age when she brought forth Jesus Christ, and that she lived but to be fifty-one.

Some Mussulmen falsely impute to the Christians that they acknowledge the Virgin Mary as the third person of the Holy Trinity, which mistake proceeds from hence—that the Christians of the East give her the name of Alsedai, which signifies the Lady; and, among the Greek fathers, St. Cyril has unguardedly called her "the supplement or completion of the most holy Trinity;" but others among the Mahometans vindicate us from this calumny.

Towards the end of the fourth century the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord was opposed by some. Epiphanius gives them the name of Antidico-marianists, or enemies to Mary. They held that, after the birth of Jesus Christ, Joseph had other children by her, whom the gospel styles the brethren of our Lord.

This conceit, which came originally from the Eunomians and Apollinarists, spread itself more particularly in Arabia. It was afterwards carried to Rome by Helvidus, and entertained by a certain bishop, who is thought to be the heresiarch Bonosus; but it pleased God to suppress it by three of the greatest men of that age, namely, St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose; to say nothing of St. Augustine, who did not write professedly against it, but encountered it by-the-bye.

Without reciting here the arguments which they made use of on this occasion, it may suffice to conclude, with St. Basil, that though this opinion does not affect the foundations of religion, which only require us to believe that Mary continued a virgin till the birth of Jesus Christ, as the gospel assures us, yet it offends the ear of pious Christians for any to affirm that she ever ceased to be such.

The ancient fathers of the Eastern and Western churches asserted her perpetual virginity; and St. Augustine tells us that this is one of those points which we ought to receive as of apostolic tradition, since the Holy Scripture gives us no more account of it than by only remarking how fully the blessed Virgin was reserved to serve God with an entire purity. The title which hath been constantly appropriated to her in all ages, as often as she is mentioned, is a good argument to confirm this belief. Bishop Pearson is wholly of this opinion in

his Exposition of the Apostles' Creed. "We believe," says he, "the mother of our Lord to have been not only before and after his nativity, but also for ever, the most immaculate and blessed Virgin. For though it may be thought sufficient, as to the mystery of the incarnation, that when our Saviour was conceived and born, his mother was a virgin; though whatsoever should have followed after could have no reflective operation upon the first fruit of her womb; though there be no further mention in the creed than that he was born of the Virgin Mary, yet the peculiar eminency and unparalleled privilege of that mother, the special honour and reverence due to that Son, and ever paid by her; the regard of that Holy Ghost who came upon her, and the power of the Highest which overshadowed her; the singular goodness and piety of Joseph, to whom she was espoused, have persuaded the church of God in all ages to believe that she still continued in the same virginity, and therefore is to be acknowledged ἀεὶ παρθένος, as the Greek church always called her; and from them the Latin, *semper Virgo*, 'the perpetual Virgin;' as if the gate of the sanctuary in the prophet Ezekiel were to be understood of her: 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened; and no man shall enter in by it, because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut.'" Many, indeed, have had the boldness to deny this truth, because not recorded in the sacred writings, and not only so, but to assert the contrary as delivered in the Scriptures, but with no success; for though, as they object, St. Matthew testified that Joseph knew not Mary until she had brought forth her first-born Son, from whence they would infer that afterwards he knew her, yet the manner of the Scripture language produceth no such inference. When God said to Jacob, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of," (Gen. xxviii. 15,) it follows not that, when that was done, the God of Jacob left him. When the conclusion of Deuteronomy was written, it was said of Moses, "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day;" but it were a weak argument to infer from thence that the sepulchre of Moses hath not been known ever since. Again, it is true that Christ is termed the first-born Son of Mary, from whence they infer she must needs have a second; but they might as well conclude that wheresoever there is one there must be two, for in this particular the Scripture notion of priority excludeth an antecedent, but inferreth not a consequent. It supposes none to have gone before, but concludeth not any to follow after. Sanctify unto me, said God, all the first-born; which was a firm and fixed law, immediately obliging upon the birth; whereas, if the first-born had included a relation to a second, there could have been no present certainty, but a suspension of obedience. Nor had the first-born been

sanctified of itself, but the second had sanctified the first.

As to our Lord's brethren, it has been hinted before in what sense they are so called. Some, instead of lessening, have over-magnified the blessed Virgin, respecting her as a goddess, and offering up prayers and oblations in her name, and particularly a kind of bread or cake which the Greeks called κολλυρὰ, or collyride, whence these heretics were named Collyridians. These were principally a set of women in Arabia who fell into this kind of idolatry. Epiphanius wrote on purpose to confute this superstition, showing how the honour due to the blessed Virgin ought to be distinguished from that adoration and worship which are proper to God alone, lest we should glorify the creature instead of the Creator.

The Nestorians came next in order of time, and attributed too little to the blessed Virgin, denying her the honourable appellation which the church then and long before had given her—that is, "the mother of God"—because they would not allow that her Son was God incarnate. They were condemned by a general council held at Ephesus in the year 431.

The Eutychian heretics, who quickly followed the Nestorians, ran into the contrary extreme; for, pretending to draw an argument for their heresy from the quality of the mother of God, they gloried in paying her more honour than the Catholics. And Peter Fullo, one of the worst of them, who had thrice usurped the see of Antioch, was the first who began to call upon her by way of invocation in prayer, in which he was too grossly followed by those who otherwise condemned him as a heretic—I mean those of the Romish communion.

The worship of the Virgin Mary universally prevails in the countries where the Romish religion is professed, but nowhere with greater pomp of superstition and splendour of outward veneration than at Loretto, a city in the marquisate of Ancona, belonging to the ecclesiastical state in Italy, where is an immense profusion of treasure, which has been offered to her at different times by the votaries of that religion in all ages, ever since the Romish clergy have made the belief pass current that the Santa Casa, or holy house, is that in which the blessed Virgin Mary is said to have been born, saluted by the angel, and brought up her Son till he was twelve years of age, and which the Roman Catholics pretend was by the ministry of angels carried through the air from Galilee to Tersato in Dalmatia, on the east side of the Adriatic Sea, in the year 1291, and in three years and a half afterwards transported over the Gulf of Venice into Italy, and, after two or three short migrations or removals, was at length fixed in its present situation at Loretto. Over this holy house is a magnificent church built, and in it an image of the blessed Virgin, placed in a niche, with the heavenly

Infant on her right arm, and a triple crown on her head, the whole statue being covered with diamonds and pearls, and round it a sort of rainbow of precious stones of various colours. All the altars, utensils, and ornaments are immensely rich. The sacristy, or treasury, is filled with jewels, gold vessels, and ornaments more precious than gold itself—the votive presents of emperors, kings, princes, empresses, queens, popes, and other personages of both sexes for these many hundred years past. Works of silver are not thought worthy to be admitted here. The whole is computed to be worth nine millions of rix-dollars. The annual revenue of the Santa Casa in land, &c., is between twenty-seven and thirty thousand crowns, besides presents and votive donations. To this holy house five hundred thousand pilgrims have often resorted in one year between Easter and Whitsuntide; and during two days in September, at the festival of the blessed Virgin's nativity, no less than two hundred thousand have visited Loretto. This prodigious concourse of people was, indeed, before the Reformation, but the usual number now is between forty and fifty thousand; and as none of these come empty handed, we may easily conclude that its riches are still increasing. This is reckoned by all good Catholics to be the most sacred place under heaven.

"Some writers," says Dr. Nichols, "both in the Greek and Latin church, tell a strange story about the blessed Virgin's assumption into heaven, and that with great variety in their relation; some affirming her to be conveyed thither alive, like Enoch and Elias; others that after her death she arose again, and was carried triumphantly into heaven. But all the history of this translation is taken from apocryphal books, which deserve not much credit; and though the church of Rome has adopted this story into her worship, and celebrates it annually with a particular service on the 15th of August, yet the authors who support this history are condemned by all the learned men of that church."

I must own that this notion is of considerable antiquity; for it is mentioned by Epiphanius, who says he will do nothing to depreciate the honour of the Virgin, and therefore will not contradict it, but rather acquiesce in the Scriptures, which say nothing at all of it.

MARY, THE SISTER OF LAZARUS.

THIS holy woman has been preposterously confounded with the sinful person who sat at the feet of the blessed Jesus weeping while he was at meat in the house of Simon the leper. (Luke vii. 37—39.) Who this sinner was is unknown. Some will have her to be Mary Magdalene; but this opinion has nothing more than conjecture for its basis.

But, whoever that sinner was, she was a very different person from Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who, with her sister Martha, lived with their brother at Bethany, a village near Jerusalem. The blessed Jesus had a particular affection for this family, and often retired to their house with his disciples. One day, and perhaps the first time that Jesus went thither, Martha received him with remarkable affection, and took the greatest pains in providing a proper entertainment for him; but Mary, her sister, continued sitting at our Saviour's feet listening to his words with peculiar attention. This Martha considered as an instance of disrespect, and therefore said to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." But the blessed Jesus justified Mary by telling her sister that she had chosen the better part which should not be taken from her.

Some time after their brother Lazarus fell sick, and his sisters sent to acquaint Jesus of the misfortune; but he did not arrive at Bethany till after Lazarus was dead. Martha, hearing Jesus was come into the neighbourhood, came to him, and told him that if he had not been absent her brother had been still alive. Jesus promised her that her brother should rise again, to which Martha answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus replied, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he

that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Martha answered, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Having said this, she departed, and gave her sister notice privately that Jesus was come. Mary, as soon as she heard the welcome tidings, arose and went to Jesus; and, as Martha had done before her, said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The blessed Jesus was greatly moved at the pathetic complaints of these two worthy sisters, and, on asking where they had buried him, they conducted him to the place of his sepulture.

On his arrival at the place where the body of Lazarus was deposited, the great Redeemer of mankind groaned deeply in his spirit: he wept, he prayed to his Father, and then cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." The dead obeyed the voice of the Son of God, Lazarus immediately revived, and Jesus restored him to his sisters.

After performing this stupendous miracle, Jesus departed from the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and did not return thither till some days before the Passover. Six days before that festival Jesus came again to Bethany with his disciples, and was invited to a supper at the house of Simon the leper. Martha attended, and Lazarus was one of the guests.

During the supper, Mary, to express her gratitude, took a pound of spikenard, a very precious perfume, and poured it on the head and feet of Jesus, wiping his feet with the hair of her head; and the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Judas Iscariot was highly offended at this generous action; but his Master vindicated Mary, and told him that by this she had prefigured his embalmment, thereby signifying that his death and burial were at hand.

After this we have no account of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, in the sacred writings. Several authors, indeed, by not distinguishing properly between Mary, the sister of Martha, and Mary Magdalene, say that she was present at the crucifixion of the great Redeemer of mankind, and also that both she and her sister accompanied the women who went to embalm the body. This is not, indeed, improbable; but it is certain neither of them is particularly mentioned by the evangelists. The ancient Latins believed, and the Greeks are still of the same opinion, that both Martha and Mary continued at Jerusalem, and died there; and several ancient martyrologies place their feast on the 19th of January.

JOSEPH.

JOSEPH, or Joses, was the son of Mary Cleophas, brother to St. James the Less, and a near relation to the blessed Jesus according to the flesh, being the son of Mary, the Holy Virgin's sister, and Cleophas, who was Joseph's brother, or son to Joseph himself, as several of the ancients suppose, who have asserted that Joseph was married to Mary Cleophas, or Escha, before he was married to the Holy Virgin. Some believe Joseph, the son of Mary Cleophas, to be the same with Joseph Barsabas, surnamed the Just, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and was proposed with St. Matthias to fill up the traitor Judas's place; but in this there is no certainty at all. We learn nothing particular in Scripture concerning Joseph, the brother of our Lord. If he was one of those among his near kinsmen who did not believe in him, when they would have persuaded him to go to the feast of tabernacles some months before our Saviour's death, it is probable that he was afterwards converted; for it is intimated in Scripture that at last all our Saviour's brethren believed in him; and St. Chrysostom says that they were signalised for the eminence of their faith and virtue.

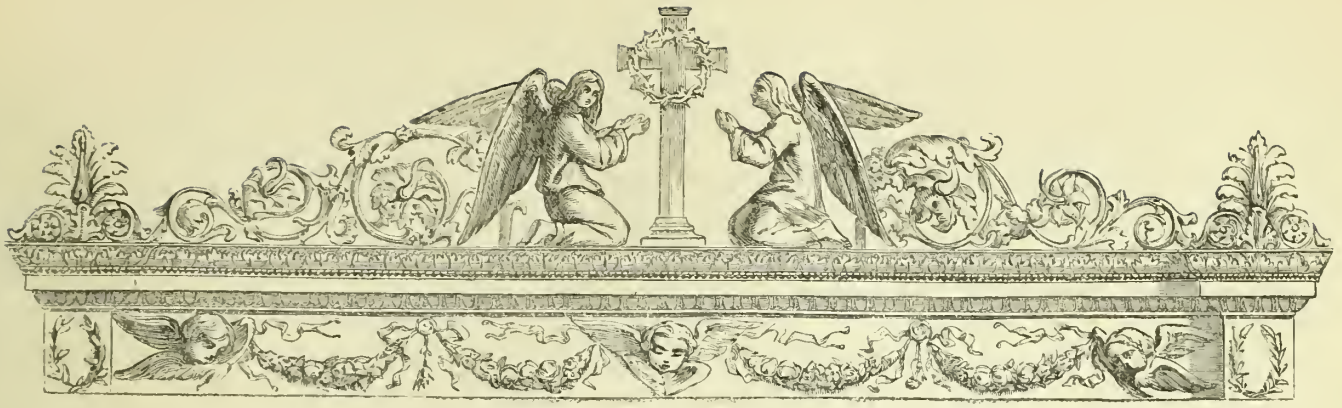
El-Jib (Gibeon), with Neby Samwil in the distance.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA, or of Ranatha, Rama, or Ramula, a city between Joppa and Jerusalem, was a Jewish senator, and privately a disciple of Jesus Christ. He was not consenting to the designs of the rest of the Jews, particularly of the members of the Sanhedrim, who condemned and put Jesus to death; and, when our Saviour was dead, he went boldly to Pilate, and desired the body of Jesus, in order to bury it. This he obtained; and accordingly he buried it honourably in a sepulchre newly made in a garden, which was upon the same Mount Calvary where Jesus had been crucified. After he had placed it there, he closed the entrance with a stone cut particularly for this purpose, and which exactly filled the opening of it.

The Greek church keeps the festival of Joseph of Arimathea on the 31st of July.

We do not meet with his name in the old Latin martyrologies; nor was it inserted in the Roman till after the year 1585. The body of Joseph of Arimathea was, they say, brought to the abbey of Moyenmontier by Fortunatus, archbishop of Grada, to whom Charlemagne had given this monastery, under the denomination of a benefice. Here the body of this saint was honoured till the tenth age; but then the monastery being given to canons, who continued seventy years there, the relics of this saint were carried away by some foreign monks, and so lost, with many others, not to say anything of the Acts of Joseph of Arimathea, which are generally supposed to be spurious.



NICODEMUS.

NICODEMUS, one of the disciples of our blessed Saviour, was a Jew by nation, and by sect a Pharisee. The gospel calls him a ruler of the Jews, and Christ gives him the name of a master of Israel. When our Saviour began to manifest himself by his miracles at Jerusalem, at the first Passover which he celebrated there after his baptism, Nicodemus made no doubt but that he was the Messiah, and came to him by night, that he might learn of him the way of salvation. Jesus told him that no one could see the kingdom of heaven except he should be born again. Nicodemus, taking this in the literal sense, made answer, How can a man be born again? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb? to which Jesus replied, If a man be not born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Nicodemus asked him, How can these things be? Jesus answered, Art thou a master of Israel, and ignorant of these things? We tell you what we know, and you receive not our testimony. If you believe not common things, and which may be called earthly, how will you believe me if I speak to you of heavenly things? Nobody has ascended into heaven but the Son of God, who came down from thence. And just as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up on high; for God has so loved the world that he has given his only Son, so that no man who believes in him shall perish, but shall have eternal life.

After this conversation Nicodemus became a disciple of Jesus Christ; and there is no doubt to be made but he came to hear him as often as our Saviour came to Jerusalem. It happened on a time that the priests and

Pharisees had sent officers to seize Jesus, who returned to them, and made this report, that never man spoke as he did, to which the Pharisees replied, Are you also of his disciples? Is there any one of the elders or Pharisees that has believed in him? Then Nicodemus thought himself obliged to make answer, saying, Does the law permit us to condemn any one before he is heard? to which they replied, Are you also a Galilean? Read the Scriptures, and you will find that never any prophet came out of Galilee. After this the council was dismissed. At last Nicodemus declared himself openly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when he came with Joseph of Arimathea to pay the last duties to the body of Christ crucified, which they took down from the cross, embalmed, and laid in the sepulchre.

Nicodemus received baptism from the disciples of Christ, but it is uncertain whether before or after his passion.

The Jews, being informed of this, deposed him from his dignity of senator, excommunicated, and drove him from Jerusalem. It is said, also, that they would have put him to death, but that, in consideration of Gamaliel who was his uncle or cousin-german, they contented themselves with beating him almost to death, and plundering his goods. Gamaliel conveyed him to his country house, and provided him with what was necessary for his support; and, when he died, Gamaliel buried him honourably near St. Stephen. His body was discovered in 415, together with those of St. Stephen and Gamaliel; and the Latin church pays honour to all three on the 3rd of August.

An apocryphal gospel under the name of Nicodemus is still extant, which in some manuscripts bears the title of the Acts of Pilate; but it is certain that this is not what the ancients cite under the name of the Acts of Pilate, which this last sent to Tiberius, being only a modern piece, full of fables and absurdities, and deserving no regard to be paid it. At the end of this spurious gospel are read these words, which are sufficient to show its falsity: "In the name of the Holy Trinity here end the acts of our Saviour Jesus Christ; which were found at Jerusalem by Theodosius the Great, in the pretorium of Pontius Pilate, in the public acts which were written in the nineteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius, and the seventeenth year of Herod, son of Herod, king of Galilee, the eighth day before the kalends of April, &c., in the two hundred and second Olympiad, under the chief priests, Joseph and Caiaphas; which was brought to the form of a history by Nicodemus, and written in Hebrew after the crucifixion and passion of our Saviour."

NICHOLAS.

NICHOLAS was a proselyte at Antioch, and there converted from the Pagan to the Jewish religion; but the time of his birth is uncertain. Afterwards he embraced Christianity, and was one of the most zealous and most holy men amongst the first Christians, so that he was chosen for one of the first seven deacons of the church of Jerusalem. His memory has been tarnished in the church by a blemish from which it has not been possible to clear him hitherto. Certain heretics were called Nicholaites, from his name; and though, perhaps, he had no share in their errors or irregularities, yet he is suspected at least to have given some handle to them. This is what the ancients inform us in this matter. He had a wife who was very handsome; and, in imitation of those who aimed at a great degree of perfection, he left her to live in a state of continency. St. Epiphanius says that he did not persevere in this resolution, but took his wife again; and, in order to justify his conduct, he advanced principles contrary to truth and purity. He plunged himself into irregularities, and gave a beginning to the sect of the Nicholaites, to that of the Gnostics, and to several others, who, following the bent of their passions, invented a thousand different sorts of crimes and enormities.

St. Epiphanius is supported in this by several ancient fathers of the church, as Irenæus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Hilary, Gregory of Nyssa, Philaster of Bressa, Jerome, Cassian, Gregory the Great, Pacian, Pope Gelasius, Gilda, and also by many moderns, who say that Nicholas the deacon was head and author of the infamous and impious sect of the Nicholaites.

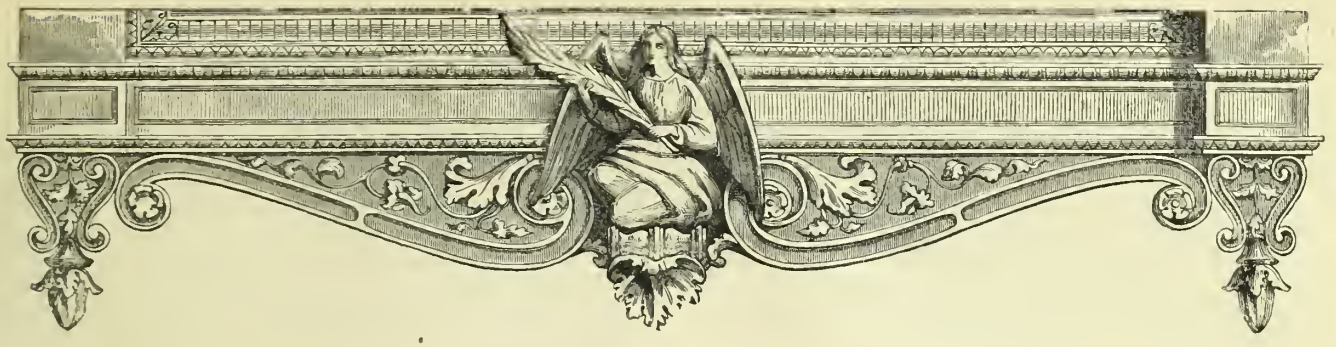
But Clemens Alexandrinus, who was more ancient than Epiphanius, expresses great esteem for Nicholas, and relates the affair quite otherwise. The apostles, says he, having made some reproaches on Nicholas, as

being too jealous of his wife, he caused her to come before them all, and declared that any one might espouse her that pleased. This declaration, which he made in pure simplicity, and without due reflection, was only designed as a proof of the little attachment and passion he had for his wife; and in reality, as St. Clement adds, I have been informed he never cohabited with any other woman. And with regard to his son and his daughters, who lived to a pretty old age, they always remained in a state of perfect virginity. But such as were willing to use the pretence of Nicholas's authority, vindicated themselves by what he had done, in order to abandon themselves to all sorts of irregularity.

These heretics, as the same Clement reports, grounded themselves upon a word which Nicholas let drop, that the flesh ought to be abused: by which nothing else was meant but that we ought to suppress our inclinations to sensuality and concupiscence, and to mortify the passions and impetuosity of the flesh; whereas these disciples of pleasure explained the words according to their own sensuality, and not agreeably to the meaning of this apostolic man. Eusebius, having related that the Nicholaites gloried in having Nicholas the deacon as the author of their sect, confutes them by adducing at length this passage of Clement. Theodoret does the same, and he declares still more openly for the sentiment of Clement; for, excusing the permission of Nicholas, by which he allowed any one to marry his wife, he says that the deacon had in reality no inclination to permit it, but only intended by this voluntary offer to confute those who had raised a murmuring against him.

St. Austin, Victorinus, Petaviensis, Isidorus, and the Council of Tours also acquit Nicholas.

Cassian says that some distinguished Nicholas, the founder of the sect of the Nicholaites, from the person of the same name who was one of the first seven deacons. Probably he would hint at the author of the Apostolical Constitutions, who says that the Nicholaites unjustly screen themselves under the authority of Nicholas, one of the first deacons. Jesus Christ, in the Revelation of St. John, (ii. 6, 15,) condemns the actions as well as the doctrine of the Nicholaites. He says he hates them; he makes it a merit in the bishop of Ephesus that he abhors them; and reproaches the bishop of Pergamos that some of his church adhered to their doctrines. In all these passages St. John does not insinuate the least thing that may seem to excuse Nicholas, nor to clear him from the accusation of his being the author of the sect of Nicholaites; and besides, we see that no Christian church has ever paid any honour to the memory of Nicholas, which is a great circumstance against him.



JOHN MARK.

JOHN MARK, cousin to St. Barnabas, and a disciple of his, was the son of a Christian woman, named Mary, who had a house in Jerusalem, where the apostles and the faithful generally used to meet. Here they were at prayers in the night, when St. Peter, who was delivered out of prison by the angel, came and knocked at the door; and in this house the celebrated church of Zion was said to have been afterwards established.

John Mark, whom some very improperly confound with the evangelist St. Mark, adhered to St. Paul and St. Barnabas, and followed them in their return to Antioch: he continued in their company and service till they came to Perga, in Pamphylia; but, seeing that they were then undertaking a longer journey, he left them, and returned to Jerusalem. This happened in the year 42 of the common era.

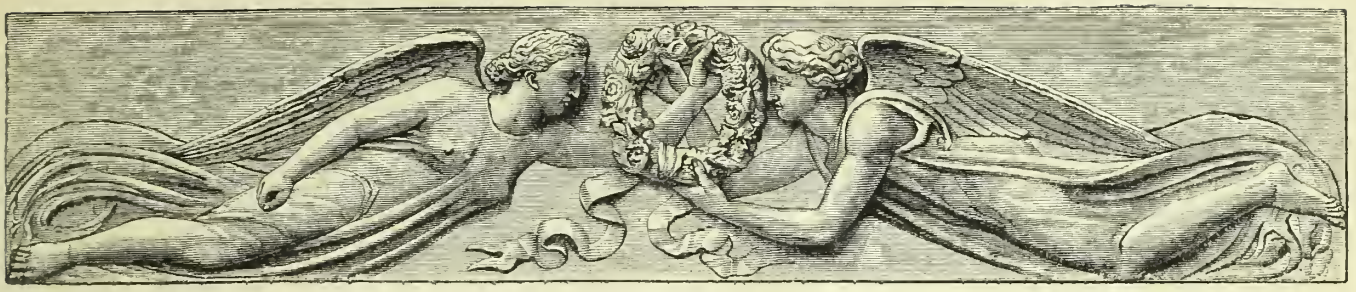
Some years after—that is to say, in the year 51—Paul and Barnabas preparing to return into Asia, in order to visit the churches which they had formed there, Barnabas was of opinion that John Mark should accompany them in this journey; but Paul would not consent to it, upon which occasion these two apostles separated. Paul went to Asia, and Barnabas, with John Mark, to the isle of Cyprus. What John Mark did after this journey we do not know, till we find him at Rome in the year 63, performing signal services for St. Paul during his imprisonment.

The apostle speaks advantageously of him in his Epistle to the Colossians: "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, saluteth you. If he come unto you, receive him." He makes mention of him again in his Epistle to Philemon, written in the year 62, at which time he was with St. Paul at Rome; but in the year 65 he was with Timothy in Asia; and St. Paul, writing to Timothy, desires him to

bring Marcus to Rome, adding that he was useful to him in his ministerial labours.

In the Greek and Latin churches the festival of John Mark is kept on the 27th of September. Some say that he was bishop of Biblis, in Phœnicia. The Greeks give him the title of apostle, and say that the sick were cured by his shadow only. It is very probable that he died at Ephesus, where his tomb was very much celebrated and resorted to. He is sometimes called simply John, or Mark. The year of his death we are strangers to, and shall not collect all that is said of him in apocryphal writings.

Mount Tabor from the North.



CLEMENT.

CLEMENT is mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians, where the apostle says that Clement's name is written in the book of life. The generality of the fathers and other interpreters make no question but that this is the same Clement who succeeded St. Paul, after Linus and Cletus, in the government of the church of Rome; and this seems to be intimated when, in the office for St. Clement's day, that church appoints this part of the Epistle to the Philippians to be read. On the contrary, Grotius is of opinion that the Clement St. Paul speaks of was no more than a priest of the church of Philippi.

We find several things relating to Clement's life in the Recognitions and Constitutions called apostolical, but as those works are not looked upon as authentic, though there may be truths in them derived from the tradition of the first ages, little stress is to be laid upon their testimony. St. Chrysostom thinks that Clement, mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians, was one of the apostle's constant fellow-travellers. Irenæus, Origen, Clemens of Alexandria, and others of the ancients assert that Clement was a disciple of the apostles; that he had seen them and heard their instructions. St. Epiphanius, Jerome, Rufinus, Bede, and some others were of opinion that, as the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul could not be continually at Rome, by reason of the frequent journeys which they were obliged to make to other places, and it was not proper that the city of Rome should be without a bishop, there was a necessity to supply the want of them by establishing Linus, Anacletus, and Clement there. The Constitutions inform us that Linus was ordained by St. Paul. Tertullian and Epiphanius say that St. Peter ordained Clement. Rufinus tells us that this apostle chose St. Clement for his successor. But Epiphanius believes that, after he had

been made bishop of Rome by St. Peter, he refused to exercise his office till after the death of Linus and Anacletus, although he was obliged to take upon him the care of the church; and this is the most generally received opinion. St. Peter's immediate successor was Linus; Linus was succeeded by Anacletus; and Anacletus by Clement, in the year of Christ 91, which was the tenth of Domitian's reign.

During his pontificate the church of Corinth having been disturbed by a spirit of division, St. Clement wrote a large letter to the Corinthians, which is still extant, and was so much esteemed by the ancients, that they read it publicly in many churches; and some have been inclined to range it among the canonical writings. The Emperor Domitian intended to declare war against the church of Jesus Christ. A revelation of his design was made to Hermas, who was ordered to give a copy of it to Pope Clement, that he might communicate it to other churches, and exhort them to provide against the storm. We have no certain accounts of what happened to St. Clement during this persecution; but we are very well assured that he lived to the third year of Trajan, which is the hundredth of Jesus Christ. His festival is set down by Bede and all the Latin martyrologists on the 23rd of November. The Greeks honour him on the 24th and 25th of the same month. Rufinus and Pope Zosimus gave him the title of Martyr; and the Roman church in its canon places him among the saints who have sacrificed their lives for Jesus Christ. We read in an ancient history, to the authenticity of which, however, there are some exceptions, that St. Clement was banished by Trajan to the Chersonesus, beyond the Euxine Sea, besides other particulars in the history which we shall not mention, as having too much the air of fable.

The Entombment.

MARY MAGDALENE.

MARY MAGDALENE was a native either of Magdala, a town in Galilee, on the other side of Jordan, or Magdalos, a town situated at the foot of Mount Carmel, and had her surname from the place of her birth. Some will have it that she was the sinner mentioned by St. Luke, chap. vii. 36, &c.; but this opinion is built only on conjecture. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us that Jesus had cast out of her seven devils, which some understand in a literal, and others in a figurative, sense.

But however this be, she became a constant attendant on the blessed Jesus after he had removed her plague. She followed him to Mount Calvary, continued amidst the Roman guards at the foot of the cross with the Holy Virgin, and saw his precious body laid in the tomb, after which she returned to Jerusalem to purchase spices to embalm him as soon as the Sabbath was over.

It was she who carried the welcome tidings to Peter and John; and to her our blessed Lord himself first appeared after his resurrection. The apostles did not, however, believe her report till it was confirmed by others, and they themselves had seen the Saviour of the world.

We have no further account of Mary Magdalene in the sacred writings. But Modestus, archbishop of Constantinople in the seventh century, tells us that she continued at Jerusalem till the death of the Holy Virgin, after which she retired to Ephesus, and lived with St. John till she sealed the faith she had so long professed with her blood. She was buried by the Christians at Ephesus, where her tomb was shown in the seventh century. But the Emperor Leo the Wise caused her body to be removed from Ephesus to Constantinople in the latter end of the ninth century, in order to its being interred

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